

**Bible Translation and Social Literacies  
Among Four Nso' Churches in Cameroon:  
An Ethnographic Study  
of Scripture Use**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the ways in which four Christian churches (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Church of Christ) in an Nso' community of the Northwest Province of Cameroon make language choices when using the Bible. A translation of the New Testament in Lamnso' (the language of the Nso') has been available for over 20 years, and each church uses the vernacular Bible translation in ways that are appropriate to that church's tradition. In addition, English and Pidgin English Bible translations, as well as Lamnso', are available options, and this study examines the ways that each church's tradition influences the language choices, oral and written, which characterize the use of the Bible.

The research which informs this study was conducted among the churches in one Nso' village from September 2002 to August 2003. The study used an ethnographic method of historical research, participant observation, and interviews to gather data regarding each church's tradition and members' own current understanding of practices surrounding biblical texts. It theorizes scripture as social practices surrounding biblical texts (following a New Literacy Studies approach) and particularly focuses on the specialized knowledge of leaders who use biblical texts in church services and the ways in which they acquire theological and linguistic competencies for their use of the Bible.

Conceptualizing scripture in terms of the literacy practices surrounding Bible translation offers an interdisciplinary alternative to previous accounts of the role of Bible translation in African Christianity. This study argues that the construal of the meaning of vernacular Bible translation cannot be accomplished independently of the ways languages and literacies are used in daily life. The investigation results in an interpretation that emphasizes a multilingual approach for an adequate understanding of the way the Bible is used among the Nso' churches studied, where no one language is sufficient in scriptural practice.

Following an introduction to the subject, Chapter One proposes a theory of scripture, drawing a connection between Wilfred Cantwell Smith's religio-historical theory of scripture and New Literacy Studies' sociolinguistic theory of multiple literacies. Chapter Two introduces the research setting in Cameroon and the ethnographic methods used in the investigation. Chapter Three examines the history of the development of Cameroonian languages among the four churches studied. Chapters Four and Five respectively describe the church services as sites of scripture use and the church leaders as specialists in the knowledge of scripture use. Chapter Six interprets the findings in relation to other theories regarding literacy and Bible translation in African settings. The conclusion points to the contributions of the thesis to the discipline of the study of World Christianity.



## **Declaration**

I attest that this thesis has been composed solely by myself, and it is my own work. All references to others' work are appropriately cited. I also attest that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Joel Trudell

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## **Abbreviations**

L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LAP	Life Abundant Primary Health Programme
NLS	New Literacy Studies
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
WWDP	Women's World Day of Prayer

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# **Bible Translation and Social Literacies among Four Nso' Churches in Cameroon: an Ethnographic Study of Scripture Use**

## **Introduction**

The use of a Bible translation is a widely accepted Christian practice. Since their early adoption of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures, Christians have accepted the use of translations for scriptural texts rather than solely relying on the original languages in which they were written (Walls 1996). Moreover, the translation of the Bible continues to be an ongoing endeavor. Many new translations are done in languages which already have the Bible in some form (e.g., European languages such as English, French and Spanish). Not only are existing versions of the Bible being revised or re-translated, but the Bible is also being translated into additional languages for the first time. There have been more translations of portions of the Bible into new languages in the last seventy years than there have been translations of the Bible into any language since the beginnings of Christianity (United Bible Societies 1997).

In Africa, much of the Bible translation activity is of the latter kind: new translations into additional languages. Of the estimated 2,058 living languages spoken in Africa, only 613 have had at least some portion of the Bible translated (Grimes 2000; United Bible Societies 1997). One group of Bible translation agencies, the United Bible Societies, cites a total of 185 Bible translation projects in progress as of 1997 (United Bible Societies 1998). The translation of the Bible into additional languages raises questions for the study of Christianity in Africa: how are these new translations being used? In many cases churches have spread to parts of Africa where local languages have yet to be developed in written form, and where there have been no Bible translations made in the local language. Since the Bible has an important place in the practice of Christianity, these churches have long functioned with some form of Bible translation, albeit not the mother tongue of its users. Therefore, the trend of translating the Bible so that Christians may have it in their mother tongue raises the question of assessing how these new translations are used. For churches in Africa that already have an established practice for the use of the Bible in some language of wider communication, what difference does the introduction of an additional Bible translation in a local African language make in the expression of Christianity?

The argument of this study is that Bible reading and interpretation always occur in a historical, social, denominational, and linguistic context. When translations of the Bible become available in more than one language, choices arise concerning which version to use. These language choices are not isolated from the ways in which people are accustomed to using the Bible. Thus, examining language choice in respect of Bible translations in a particular language community requires an understanding of the ways in which churches in that community use the Bible. Choices of language—whether the language of the Bible itself, or the language that people use when speaking *about* it—are made in the context of the customary uses of the Bible in church. Language choices surrounding the Bible in church contexts also depend on the uses of reading and writing in the society at large, as well as the language options that are available for reading and writing. The history of literacy and education in a given community, as well as the current practices regarding written texts, form part of the larger context that informs the uses and interpretations of whatever version of the Bible is available.

The goal of this study is to elucidate the impact of such contextual elements on the use of Bible translation in an African language. The study examines the use of Bible translation and literacy among the Nso' of Cameroon in church settings where the translation in the local language (Lamnso') has been made available in the last twenty years by means of these churches' participation in a Bible translation project. The research was conducted from September 2002 to August 2003 among four churches (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Church of Christ) in an Nso' village (Bamkov<sup>1</sup>) in the Northwest Province of Cameroon. It focuses on language choices surrounding reading and writing in the context of the history of language usage in this part of Cameroon, as well as examining current usage of texts in churches. An understanding of historical and present usages of literacy creates a contextual framework for analyzing the ways that church members make choices among the Bible translations available in English, Pidgin English, and Lamnso'.

### ***A Case Illustrating the Research Questions***

The importance of this wider context for understanding the use of the Bible is illustrated in an incident that occurred early in my field research. As a part of my initial effort to examine the uses of reading and writing in daily life, I interviewed Bernadette<sup>2</sup> in her home. She is a Christian Nso' woman who practices traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Bamkov is a pseudonym for the village in Nso' where the research was conducted.

<sup>2</sup> The convention for this thesis is that use of only a first name indicates a pseudonym, whereas a first name and surname indicates a person's actual identity.



healing (locally referred to in English as *country medicine*). From this interview and its follow-up I constructed the following case:

Bernadette described her use of herbs in healing and how she writes down her recipes. She brought out a notebook in which she recorded these recipes in English, with transliterations of Lamnso' words that she did not know in English. In this context of her description of country medicine, she described her practice of divination as part of her effort to help "solve people's problems." By way of explanation, she told me that the divination that she practiced was the same thing that was practiced in the Old Testament book of Jonah.<sup>3</sup> She brought out an English Bible and we looked at the passage together, but she was dissatisfied with the English wording. She brought out another English Bible and a Lamnso' translation of Jonah. While I was looking up the passage in the second English version, she found the verse in the Lamnso' translation and pointed to the Lamnso' word for divination [shwén<sup>4</sup>]. That was the word for what she practiced, and by implication, her practice of divination was acceptable.

Following the interview, I described this encounter to leaders of each of the churches in Bamkov (without identifying Bernadette's name and church affiliation). None of the leaders interpreted the passage in Jonah as legitimizing the practice of divination. Some allowed that aspects of *country medicine*, such as healing with herbs, are legitimate, but all agreed that divination which purports to discover unseen causes (e.g., for barrenness) or to foretell the future is not acceptable Christian practice. Significantly, Roger, a Catholic priest, commented that he thought that the woman I described was probably a Baptist, because a Catholic would not have used the Bible in that manner.

Roger was correct: Bernadette is a Baptist. She is active in her church and a leader who represents her local church in the women's assembly at the Baptist denominational conference in Cameroon. Her husband is the Appointed Deacon, the lay leader who presides over the local church board. Bernadette is well acquainted with the expectations of what it means to be a Baptist in Cameroon, and yet her interpretation of the Bible is at variance with all of the Christian leaders in her village, including the pastor of her own Baptist church.

This case—Bernadette's use of the Bible and the response by local church leaders—raises a number of questions which are central to the research conducted in this study. The first question concerns the role that comprehension of the text plays in the use of the Bible in situations where there is the option of more than one language. Bernadette owns more than one version of the Bible in English, as well as the Lamnso' translations of the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament. She is familiar with the English Bible, yet in our conversation she clearly understood

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<sup>3</sup> In the story, Jonah is at sea in a storm and the ship is in danger of sinking. The sailors cast lots to divine who was responsible (Jonah 1:7).

<sup>4</sup> According to the SIL consultant to the Lamnso' Old Testament project, "this word means, 'to divine' in a very general way using any method, such as casting cola nut peelings or more elaborate magical practices."

the Lamnso' version better than the English version because Lamnso' is her mother tongue. This is significant because, paradoxically, it is the Lamnso' text that led her to misconstrue the meaning of the text. The Lamnso' translation confirmed her alternative interpretation because it used the exact word in Lamnso' for the divination that she practiced. This suggests that better comprehension—the improved understanding that comes though using the mother tongue—does not ensure the correct interpretation of the text.

Another question raised by this case concerns the matter of the socially “correct” interpretation, in the disparity between Bernadette’s understanding of the Jonah passage and that of all the other village Christian leaders. How did they, each within their respective churches, learn to arrive at the correct<sup>5</sup> interpretation of Jonah when Bernadette clearly misinterpreted it? Even though Bernadette has considerable experience as a member of the Baptist church, apparently her familiarity with the church was not sufficient to ensure that she arrived at the same interpretation of the scripture passage. This raises the question of the means by which leaders learn to use scripture correctly in their own church traditions, and whether such means were accessible to Bernadette as an ordinary person in her Baptist context. Put another way, if accessibility of the language and the text of the Bible are insufficient for arriving at the correct interpretation, what additional means are used for interpreting the Bible correctly according to each church’s tradition?

Another intriguing question, this time concerning denominational context, is raised by Roger’s response. Even though he concurred with the other local church leaders that Bernadette had misinterpreted the Jonah passage, he thought that there was something un-Catholic in the very manner in which she used the Bible. From Roger’s perspective, hers was a Baptist usage of the Bible, and not one that a Catholic would be likely to practice. Thus, not only was Bernadette’s interpretation wrong by all accounts, it was also done in a characteristically Baptist way. This raises the question whether there are multiple ways to use the Bible, such that people arrive at interpretations and misinterpretations in ways that are characteristic of each denomination.

Roger’s comment highlights a premise of this study: there are important features of the social meaning of the Bible in addition to the interpretation of the text itself. It was relatively easy to ascertain that none of the church leaders interpreted the Jonah passage to justify divination. What constituted Bernadette’s characteristically Baptist usage would require more research. Theoretical and methodological approaches to

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<sup>5</sup> In this context *correct* means in alignment with each church’s own interpretation.

investigating the social meaning of a text differ from those used for the interpretation of the biblical text itself. This study therefore seeks to formulate a theory and methodology for the study of the ways in which social context influences the making of meaning surrounding biblical texts.

This study argues from the research conducted that there are significant differences among the four church denominations represented in Bamkov regarding the ways that they use written sources, including Bible translation. However, some significant sociolinguistic commonalities regarding language choices among the churches are apparent as well. The research finds that the Lamnso' translation of the New Testament is valued and used by preference in all four churches. When available, the Lamnso' biblical text is preferred over English and Pidgin translations. The principal reason for reading English or Pidgin Bible translations in churches is the unavailability of the Lamnso' translation because most of the Old Testament has not yet been translated.

In addition to the evidence for the importance of the Lamnso' translation among the Bamkov churches, there is also considerable evidence for the importance of English and Pidgin written sources. The competencies necessary for reading the Bible in Lamnso' and interpreting it in a lesson or sermon are not widespread. Those who have such competencies are designated *scripture specialists*, and there are only a few in each church. Because all these scripture specialists have acquired their literacy skills through English medium schooling, and furthermore, because the denominational materials are largely in English or Pidgin, multilingualism is an important feature of scripture use. There are no cases of monolingual Lamnso'-speaking scripture specialists in Bamkov, and all the scripture specialists necessarily rely on English or Pidgin language competencies to carry out their responsibilities. In addition to accounting for the complexity of language use in Bamkov, this analysis concerning the importance of multilingual competencies suggests that texts in English and Pidgin influence church members' experience and use of the Lamnso' Bible translation.

#### ***Theories Influencing Research in Literacy and Bible Translation***

The research approach used in this study has its roots in the application of anthropological methods to the study of language. Historically, linguists treated language as an isolated phenomenon, focusing on what makes an utterance grammatical but ignoring how it is used in natural communicative contexts. Their methodology led them to focus on eliciting speech from an informant, rather than observing how people speak in different environments. In fact, for linguists, the term

*environment* usually refers to adjacent units of speech that surround a particular grammatical or phonological feature. On the other hand, anthropologists tended to treat language as subsidiary, as a way to get at other topics such as kinship or indigenous medicine. In a move away from such an approach, Dell Hymes, the so-called father of ethnography of communication, advocated that anthropologists should use the methods of their discipline to study language as it is used in natural contexts (Hymes 1962).

Shirley Brice Heath was among the first linguistic anthropologists to apply these research methods to the study of literacy. Heath's (1983) seminal work, *Ways With Words*, describes the differences in the ways that children in the same Piedmont Carolinas community learn to talk about meaning in books. For middle-class white children, the pre-school narrative surrounding the bedtime story prepared them for the appropriate narrative patterns surrounding texts in school. In contrast, children from working-class white and working-class black homes learned different patterns for talking about texts, which clashed with school-based literacy expectations. By the third grade, children from the latter groups were failing school and subject to negative stereotypes concerning their learning capabilities. The importance of Heath's research is that it took into account social aspects of literacy that were not normally considered in the assessment of literacy skills.

This approach to studying literacy in its social contexts has come to be called New Literacy Studies (NLS). The NLS ways of defining literacy may appear counterintuitive because they do not focus on reading skills or the meaning of the text. James Gee (1996), a principal NLS theorist, purposely does not refer to print in his definition of literacy because he wants to show the inadequacy of common functional definitions of literacy which limit it to certain quantifiable<sup>6</sup> skills. Instead, Gee compares the text to a prop in a stage play. The use of such a prop has to be coordinated by the actors with the costumes, actions and spoken lines which are designated for the play. Literacy research from this approach pays attention to everything else that is occurring around the text which makes the text relevant to the participants in the situation studied.

This study also draws on elements of Relevance Theory in its account of the social use of Bible translation. Relevance Theory is a theory of communication proposed by Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson (1986) which emphasizes the

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<sup>6</sup> In the U.S. educational system, it is common to refer to a child as reading at a certain grade level, such as, "Johnny reads at a sixth grade level." Johnny may be seven years old or fifteen years old, and the grade-level characteristics that are in focus miss the non-quantifiable issues that make Johnny a success or a failure.



importance of context in influencing the ways that audiences draw inferences in the communication process. Relevance Theory is introduced for two reasons. First, Relevance Theory is considered because it provides insight into how some Bible translators are conceptualizing the importance of context in the translation endeavor. Ernst-August Gutt (2000), himself a Bible translator, applies Relevance Theory to theorize the translation process. Second, and more important, Gutt's application of Relevance Theory accounts for the role of the text in the translation process. In the NLS accounts of literacy, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the text does not matter. If the text is only a prop, one might infer that it does not contribute much meaning. In contrast, Gutt holds that the inferences drawn from the translated text must be accountable to the original text if it is to be a faithful translation. Thus the importance of the text of the original and the text of the translation cannot be discounted in the making of meaning surrounding Bible translation.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1993) provides a third theoretical conception of Bible translation: the Bible as scripture. Smith's conception of scripture is nearly identical to the NLS theory of literacy in that scripture is not defined as a text, but as beliefs and actions surrounding texts. However, scripture is distinguished from other types of literacy in that scripture has a transcendental component. According to Smith's conception, the Bible ceases to be scripture when it is no longer a part of a Christian community's beliefs and actions with reference to God. Scripture is qualitatively different from non-scriptural literacy; however, because it is theorized so similarly to the NLS conception of literacy, Christian scripture may be *studied* in the same ways that literacy is studied, by examining the historical traditions and personal beliefs embedded in the practices surrounding the text of the Bible.

The interdisciplinary nature of this study may be seen in several ways. First, as already noted, it draws its *theoretical basis* from the fields of sociolinguistics, religious studies, and translation theory. Second, the *subject* of the research is the linguistic and literacy practices of Cameroonian Christians in particular church-related contexts. Third, the *method* employs historical sources and ethnographic data to construct an interpretation which accounts for people's language behavior and beliefs surrounding their use of Bible translation in Bamkov. Fourth, the *analysis* appeals to a sociolinguistic model of biliteracy (literacy and bilingualism) which accounts for the complexity of language and literacy usage in Bamkov. Fifth, the *application* of the analysis is made to the missiological understanding of Bible translation as a dimension of the study of Christianity in its diverse expressions. This sociolinguistic analysis is also applied to critique previous accounts of the role of literacy and Bible translation in African Christian settings.

One such account by Peter Probst (1993) of the role of literacy in a Nigerian *aladura* church posits that the textual quality of written prophecies explains their influence in overcoming weaker oral indigenous usages. This account emphasizes that sacred texts, such as the Bible, have inherent dominant qualities which people appeal to in order to gain power in religious contexts. Lamin Sanneh (1989) presents another account of the role of Bible translation which emphasizes that it is the language of Bible translation which is the most important feature in accounting for the ways that vernacular Bible translation influences the practice of Christianity. In contrast, this study argues that these features of Bible translation, as important as they are, do not account for the diversity of Christian practice surrounding Bible translation observed in Bamkov. This study takes these features (textual form and language) of Bible translation into account, but argues that it is a contextual understanding of what it means to be a Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and member of the Church of Christ in Bamkov which adequately accounts for their use of Bible translation.

### **Description of Chapters**

Chapter One discusses the theories and methods used to define scripture and investigate its use. It uses the concept of a research paradigm as a framework that classifies approaches to research according to the classic categories of ontology, epistemology and methodology. The research paradigm most relevant to this study is Critical Theory, a paradigm that seeks to account for the historical and social factors inherent in the research endeavor. However, recognizing that Critical Theory considers that research is neither value-free nor interest-free, the chapter adds a further category to the research paradigm, namely *axiology* (values, ethics, aesthetics, and religion) that can be used in the comparison of theories.

Three relevant theories are presented in Chapter One, and they are compared to each other with respect to the four categories of the research paradigm just mentioned. The three theories presented are as follows:

James Gee's version of New Literacy Studies (NLS) theory of social literacies;

Wilfred Cantwell Smith's theory of scripture as a dimension of the comparative study of religion;

Ernst-August Gutt's application of Relevance Theory (a theory of communication) to translation.

Common to these theories concerning literacy, scripture, and translation is the argument that the content of the text is not the sole determiner of meaning.

Consequently, they support a research methodology that considers the historical and social circumstances surrounding textual use.

Chapter Two introduces the research setting in Cameroon, and the methods used to conduct the investigation. It locates the four churches on which the research has been focused in their geographic, linguistic, religious, and economic setting. The study uses an ethnographic method of historical research, participant observation, and interviews to gather data regarding each church's tradition and members' own current understanding of practices surrounding Bible texts. Data<sup>7</sup> gathered through this qualitative research method is used to develop an interpretation that accounts for the patterns of scripture use among the churches.

Chapter Three examines the history of the development of Cameroonian languages among the four churches. Each church has a different history concerning the development of local languages and the use of a colonial language. The interpretation that arises from the historical research has to account for paradoxical data: in spite of the widely held belief among Protestant and Catholic missionaries that local languages were important in the life of the Cameroonian churches, no additional Cameroonian languages were developed by mission agencies for written use after World War I. New Bible translation work in Anglophone Cameroon was effectively suspended until the Lamnso' Bible translation project began in the 1970s. The evidence presented in Chapter Three shows that the British colonial educational authority's preference for a language policy favoring English actually inhibited the development of local Cameroonian languages. This English-medium educational context affected the development of Lamnso' and its use among the Nso' churches. A consequence of mission and church language policies for schooling is the present practice of literacy acquisition through English-medium schooling and its influence on the use of Bible translation and written Lamnso' in the churches.

Chapter Four examines the "sites" of scripture use. These are the church services and Bible studies sponsored by each of the churches. In describing the activities programmed at these sites, attention is given to the context surrounding events where reading takes place. The analysis notes that, for the participants, comprehensibility is a priority: where possible, Bible texts are read in Lamnso', and oral discourse is carried out in Lamnso', because Lamnso' is the language that participants understand best. But the description also notes the factors that cause the participants to choose languages other than Lamnso'—either English or Pidgin.

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<sup>7</sup> This study uses the noun *data* according to the convention described by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a plural form with a singular construction.

Chapter Five focuses on “scripture specialists,” and examines the competencies of people observed conducting the use of the Bible in the sites of scripture use for each of the four churches in Bamkov. It describes the schooling they attained and how they learned the customary ways in which their denominations use the Bible. The analysis notes that in each church there are different levels of scriptural competency, and it distinguishes between those with low levels of education, English fluency and local church training (catechists and Sunday School teachers), and those with high levels of education, English proficiency and seminary training (pastors and priests). It concludes that schooling, English proficiency and denominational training each contributes to the competence of the scripture specialists, and that all three are necessary, to some degree, for the competent handling of written materials, including the Bible, in ways that are appropriate to each denomination.

Chapter Six revisits the case of Bernadette and uses it to illustrate the various ways that the translation of the book of Jonah can be understood to be an artifact of social processes. This study’s contextual interpretation of social factors which influence literacy and Bible translation is contrasted with Probst’s and Sanneh’s analyses, which emphasize the power that texts, particularly Bible translations, have to effect consequences in Christian contexts. Finally, Nancy Hornberger’s (1989) *continua of biliteracy* is offered as a model which accounts for the sociolinguistic complexity surrounding textual usage in Bamkov churches.

This thesis offers several new contributions to scholarship regarding Bible translation in African contexts. It employs theories which have not been previously integrated into the study of Bible translation. Moreover, the application of these theories to the research conducted in Cameroon resulted in a new interpretation which explains a complex sociolinguistic situation among four churches. However, this study is not solely about sociolinguistic realities. By studying Nso’ Christians and their practices surrounding Bible translation, the theories, data, and analyses presented here also contribute to an understanding of the experience of being an Nso’ Christian.

This study realized my long-time interest in ethnographic research, social literacies, and Bible translation. Since 1982 I have worked as a literacy specialist for SIL International, an organization which applies linguistic research to literacy and Bible translation programs. My first assignment was in Peru as a consultant to an adult literacy project in an Andean Quechua language, which was conducted in cooperation with the local office of the Peruvian Ministry of Education. While in Peru, I also had the opportunity to conduct ethnographic research into literacy practices in one Quechua-speaking church (Trudell 1990). Since 1993 I have worked



as a consultant to SIL projects in various countries in Africa. While working in Africa I concluded that if I ever had another chance to do “serious research,” I would explore the ways that the study of social literacies could be employed to analyze the use of Bible translation and its role in shaping the character of Christianity in an African context. This study had been the realization of that desire.

## Chapter One

### A Research Paradigm for the Study of Bible Translation

#### **Introduction**

What is Bible translation and what is its role in the practice of Christianity? This chapter introduces several theories of literacy, scripture, and translation, and considers their implications for research concerning Bible translation. In order to study something, it is important to conceptualize its nature and qualities, and this chapter considers theories which conceptualize Bible translation as something other than a text. These theories throw light on the question of how the text of the translated Bible functions in the social context of which it is part, and in which its meaning is appropriated.

The chapter begins by considering frameworks for research, called *research paradigms*, and how these paradigms organize thinking about research. It then introduces theories concerning literacy, scripture, and translation according to the research paradigm of *critical theory*. These theories are used to explain and justify the research design and the research methods employed in this study. They provide the theoretical framework in which the research findings will be analyzed (see Chapters Three, Four and Five), and against which other theories regarding the role of Bible translation and literacy in African Christianity will be assessed (Chapter Six).

#### **Research Paradigms**

Research questions have their foundation in a particular research paradigm. A research paradigm<sup>1</sup> is an explicit description of the theories underlying the practice of research. Such theories are founded on a set of basic beliefs about how the world is constituted. The value of a research paradigm is that it organizes and makes explicit basic beliefs about the world that affect how research is conducted, thus helping the researcher to formulate a research practice that is consistent with those basic beliefs (Guba 1990:17). Every paradigm has proponents who will argue for the validity of its theories about the nature of reality, but ultimately a paradigm has to be taken on faith, i.e., researchers act on foundational precepts that cannot be proved or disproved (Guba and Lincoln 1994:107).

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<sup>1</sup> Other terms for research paradigm include *interpretive framework* (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:19) and *worldview* (LeCompte and Schensul 1999).

Traditionally a research paradigm has organized the nature of research by three basic questions:

Ontology: What is the nature of “reality”?

Epistemology: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?

Methodology: How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge? (Guba 1990:18).

The answers that particular researchers give to these questions constitute the particular research paradigms through which they approach the task of inquiry.

The positivist paradigm is the oldest paradigm and is still widely accepted. It contends that reality is observable and understandable, that there can be separation or detachment between the inquirer and the events being studied, and that the inquirer can (and should) engage in neutral or value-free methods of inquiry in order to maintain a disinterested posture towards research outcomes (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:42-43). However, subsequent research paradigms have contested whether it is possible for the researcher to maintain a disinterested posture, and whether value-free methods really exist. These alternative paradigms argue that all answers to questions of ontology, epistemology, and methodology are themselves the product of value-based theories of which researchers must be critically aware. For this reason, Lincoln and Guba (2000:169) have proposed *axiology* (values, ethics, aesthetics, and religion) as an additional basic concept of any research paradigm. Acknowledging axiology introduces the role of values and ethics as a legitimate dimension of qualitative research.<sup>2</sup> It also acknowledges that *all* research is value laden, “bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which—regardless of ultimate truth or falsity—become partially self-validating” (Bateson 1972:314). Thus, since values cannot be eradicated from research, the category of axiology contributes a fourth question to the research paradigm: what are the values that guide the researcher?

### **Critical Theory**

As a research paradigm,<sup>3</sup> critical theory is concerned in particular with the historical formation of knowledge and beliefs; it inquires into which groups are

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<sup>2</sup> According to the editors of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, “The dividing line between science and morality will continue to be erased. A postmodern, feminist, poststructural, communitarian science will move closer to a sacred science of the moral universe” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:1022).

<sup>3</sup> There are various schemes for categorizing research paradigms. Lincoln and Guba (2000) use the terms positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, and participatory/cooperative to describe the major groupings of research paradigms. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) use the terms

advantaged by these beliefs, and the processes by which the “taken-for-granted explanations of policies and practices” are accepted (Siegel and Fernandez 2002:73). Guba and Lincoln (1994:109) use the term to denote a “set of several alternative paradigms, including additionally (but not limited to) neo-Marxism, feminism, materialism, and participatory inquiry.” Critical theory guides researchers to consider the inequities and power imbalances embedded in cultural, political, and social organization. There is no single critical approach; the term *critical* can apply to a number of disciplines, as in critical ethnography, critical discourse analysis, and critical action research.

Ontologically, critical theorists are *realists* in that they take reality for granted as “real,” not merely as perception (Johnstone 2000). They are not in fact concerned with ultimate reality *per se*, but with the theories, beliefs, and values that shape reality. Epistemologically, they take reality to be historically situated; that is, what is understood as real is actually a result of confluences of historical processes such as cultural, social, and political processes in society. This awareness of reality, more often than not, takes for granted a perception of the world that is to the advantage of those groups that are in power. This advantage consists in the very unquestioned acceptance of the normalcy of the ways things are in the world, especially with respect to relationships of power.

Critical theory highlights the ethical responsibility of the researcher, as well as the research endeavor. For some, research itself is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (Smith 1999:1). For others, particular disciplines, such as ethnographic research, have been culpable of serving the interests of colonialism in the past (Ashcroft et al 1998:86). The implication is not that research be abandoned because it is hopelessly self-interested; rather, critical theories pay particular attention to the interests that research serves. They seek to make explicit the ideologies inherent in the perceptions of both of the researcher and of the society that is studied. The role of research is not to acquire knowledge independently of values (as in the positivist paradigm), but to discover how we come to acquire the knowledge we gain through research, and whose advantage it serves. Furthermore, the researchers do not discover this knowledge independently of the communities they study. Researchers’ “discoveries” are actually the result of a cooperative, participatory endeavor with some group of “subjects.” Since “social researchers’ knowledge is and must be constructed out of subjects’ own knowledge” (Cameron et

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positivism; critical theory; interpretive, phenomenological, or constructivist theory; ecological theory; and social network theory.

al 1994:25), researchers have the responsibility to admit the participatory nature of their research.

### **James Paul Gee's Theory of Discourses**

This study employs several theories that challenge conventional notions that the Bible is simply a text whose meaning is made manifest by reading it. James Gee proposes one such theory, within the critical theory research paradigm, that offers an alternative explanation of how literacy works, i.e., the ways people make meaning with texts. Gee is a linguist who has applied his discipline to understanding the ethical and ideological issues in literacy and education. He describes this social/political orientation to linguistics as a “social turn” similar to what many social scientists have experienced, “away from a focus on individual behaviour (e.g. the behaviourism of the first half of the twentieth century) and individual minds (e.g. the cognitivism of the middle part of the century) toward a focus on social and cultural interaction” (2000:180). Gee places himself in the New Literacy Studies (NLS) movement, which approaches reading and writing as practices that belong to specific social, political, cultural, historical and economic contexts. Subsequent chapters of this thesis will draw on other NLS contributors, but for the purposes of this discussion of methodological theory, Gee’s work provides a good introduction to NLS theory that can be organized within a critical theory paradigm.

Gee’s theory of literacy begins with the concept of Discourse.<sup>4</sup> A Discourse is a particular role people play in order to identify themselves with, and be identified by, other groups. In order to assume this identity, people speak, act, believe, value, think, and often read and write in ways that others in the same group will recognize as appropriate to the group. There are many such groups, and each one has a Discourse that goes along with it. Gee gives the example of the Discourse of the group which frequents an American biker bar:

Imagine I park my motorcycle, enter my neighborhood ‘biker bar’, and say to my leather-jacketed and tattooed drinking buddy, as I sit down: ‘May I have a match for my cigarette, please?’ What I have said is perfectly grammatical English, but it is ‘wrong’ nonetheless, unless I have used a heavily ironic tone of voice. It is not just *what* you say, but *how* you say it. And in this bar, I haven’t said it in the

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<sup>4</sup> Gee’s capitalization of Discourse is his idiosyncratic convention to distinguish the term from *discourse*, which is a linguistic term referring to meaningful units of language such as conversations, stories, lectures, etc. Gee acknowledges Foucault’s contributions to his theory, and his usage of Discourse resembles Foucault’s use of the term. “For Foucault, a discourse is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known” (Ashcroft et al 1998:70).

‘right way’. I should have said something like ‘Gotta match?’ or ‘Give me a light, wouldya?’

But now imagine that I say the ‘right’ thing (‘Gotta match?’ or ‘Give me a light, wouldya?’), but while saying it, I carefully wipe off the bar stool with a napkin to avoid getting my newly pressed designer jeans dirty. In this case, I’ve still got it all wrong. In *this* bar they don’t do that sort of thing: I have *said* the right thing, but my ‘saying–doing’ combination is nonetheless wrong. It is not just what you say or even how you say it, it’s also who you are and what you’re doing while you say it. It is not enough just to say the right ‘lines’. (emphasis in original, 1996:viii).

Discourse is a way of summing up all the ways of identifying and being identified with “people like us.” It is more than language or even contextual ways of speaking. It is a fundamental way of being human in the world. It refers to all the ways in which one is a certain kind of person: ways of acting, speaking, believing, valuing, thinking, and reading and writing. It also includes material things such as (in this case) matches, cigarettes, leather jackets, and motorcycles. Gee compares Discourse to an identity kit used to assume the role that goes along with membership in a group.

To use a different example (more closely related to biblical texts), if one were going to assume the role of a priest in the Scottish Episcopal Church, this identity kit would include particular external props (vestments, books, liturgical objects), the knowledge how to use them, the ability to express oneself in appropriate ways both orally and in writing, and the values and attitudes that are commensurate with the recognized behavior patterns of an Episcopal priest in Scotland.<sup>5</sup> With respect to using a Bible in this scenario, a priest would coordinate its use in a number of ways: he or she must be able to handle it appropriately as a physical artifact, using the appropriate signs of reverence (holding it aloft while processing, kissing it, etc.), exhibiting appropriate oral usage (intonation, pauses, etc.) in reading aloud and talking about the text, as well as deriving the appropriate meanings from the Bible text according to the range of interpretations acceptable to the church. Furthermore, a priest would coordinate all these things unselfconsciously.

According to Gee, each Discourse takes for granted that its way of acting is “normal” and “right.” Most people are neither conscious nor analytical of their own Discourses. The Discourses they adopt are assumed to be the natural way of speaking, acting, and reading under the circumstances in a particular setting. To

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<sup>5</sup> This is where the analogy to an identity kit breaks down. A person does not *pretend* to play the role of a Discourse—or a priest. A Discourse is not superficial. It is a social analysis of what it means to be (or to become) a certain type of person.



participate in a Discourse is by definition to identify with it. A person cannot simultaneously hold a point of view in conflict with a particular Discourse and still be inside it. People who hold perspectives contrary to a Discourse are outsiders.

There are many different Discourses: to be a man or woman; to be a certain kind of church member; to be a certain nationality; to be of a certain class in society; to be a member of a certain club. Many such Discourses will be combined in an individual person. Another way of saying this is that a person can have many identities. Gee's theory proposes that the most significant factors for explaining social circumstances are a person's identity in the group and the appropriate ways to enact being a member of the group.

Language and literacy operate within a Discourse (Gee 1996:viii). People do not talk, or read or write "in general." They communicate in specific circumstances and for very specific purposes. All instances of language and literacies<sup>6</sup> are *social*, i.e., they operate within learned practices that are shared with a group of people. People don't just pass information verbally or textually when they speak or write; they are simultaneously synchronizing language, action, and belief to express their identity in their particular situation. To understand language and literacy, it is therefore important to understand what is happening *socially* when people speak and read and write.

The examples of the biker bar and the Scottish Episcopal Church are both drawn from Western contexts in North America and Europe. In relation to the study of non-Western Christianity and culture, this theory raises the question of the ways that Discourses in non-Western contexts affect the making of meaning. More specifically to this study, what are the features of the Discourses for those who belong to the various churches in Bamkov, and what constitutes the social meaning of the Bible within these Cameroonian church contexts? These are research questions that this study explores.

To return to research paradigms, Gee may be located within the larger paradigm of critical theory. Ontologically and epistemologically, he is a realist. He acknowledges that the world is "real," not just perceived, but the nature of its reality is not his focus. He argues that the material world is the backdrop against which people participate in historically and socially constructed meanings. According to Gee,

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<sup>6</sup> For Gee, literacy is pluralized: there are many literacies corresponding to many Discourses. This usage is common among New Literacy Studies scholars.

knowing how to make sense by reading, writing, talking, or listening is, we might say, a matter of being in sync with other people in the enacting of particular identities or 'forms of life'<sup>7</sup> (Discourses). However, it is not *just* a matter of being in sync with people. We live and move in a material world; the things in it—objects, visuals representations, machines, and tools—take part in our dramas of meaning as well. Furthermore, we enter into social relations not just with the living and the present, but with the dead and the absent, thanks to the working of history and institutions that tie us together (like clubs, academic disciplines, and countries). We need to get *things* and *history* more deeply embedded into our account of making meaning. (1996:183).

Gee also employs the methodological procedures associated with critical theory. A Discourse approach to the study of literacy is not about the ability to read texts or meanings that people derive from them, but focuses on the lives of the people who practice literacy. For Gee, the study of literacy and scripture would include those historical processes that have influenced how people come to believe and act in the ways they do around texts. His theory of Discourses is primarily about people's beliefs, attitudes and practices and is only secondarily concerned with texts themselves. In fact, in one formulation Gee refers to the text as a "prop," indicating that analysis of what is going on around the text ("on stage") is more important than studying cognitive processes for decoding and interpreting the text (1996:128).

#### ***Wilfred Cantwell Smith's Theory of Scripture***

The text of a translated Bible is ostensibly scripture: it is in a special category of texts that Christians use to interpret and organize their lives. However, there are parallel arguments for considering scripture, not as a text to be decoded, but as a prop within a social process. Wilfred Cantwell Smith was a twentieth century historian of religion who sought to compare the religious traditions of the world. In his last book, Smith proposed a comparative approach that examines how scriptures operate in various religious traditions. For Smith, "the task of comparative religion is that of constructing statements that will be true in more than one tradition simultaneously" (1981:299), and in this vein he has elaborated a theory about what is true of all the various scriptures of the world's religious traditions. This theory of scripture is remarkably similar to Gee's theory of literacy, even though it appears to have been developed independently of New Literacy Studies.

Smith proposes a general theory to account for sacred texts as they are used in the religious traditions of the world. He directs the inquirer's attention to what makes

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<sup>7</sup> *Form of life* is a term Wittgenstein used to refer to the foundations of being human that is beyond being questioned (Wittgenstein 1958 cited in Gee 1996:19).



a text become scripture in the first place. However, his conclusions are counterintuitive. The conventional concept of scripture is used “to designate texts that are revered as especially sacred and authoritative” (Graham 1987:133). In this conventional approach, the study of scripture would be the study of the scripture text and of how a religious community interprets the text. Smith counters that this approach to scripture is misleading, because it locates scripture in the words of the text or the interpretive processes of a religious community. For Smith, scripture is not in the words of the text themselves:

The proper way to understand a religious statement is to endeavor not to see what its words and clauses mean (which may too easily become, what they mean to me), but to see what they meant to the man who first uttered them, and to what they have meant to those since for whom they have served as expressions of their faith (1963:183).

Neither is scripture in the interpretation of the text:

The interpretation (“hermeneutics”) of the Bible, and even a study of that interpretation, *presupposes* that a Bible exists and even presupposes that it is (or has been thought) worth interpreting—presupposes without comment the very things that are most fascinating and have been most decisive (*italics in original*, Smith 1971:136).

In order to understand these “most fascinating and most decisive” presuppositions, we will consider the paradigm that Smith is working from.

According to Smith, “reality transcends us” (1993:229-30). Ontologically, Smith (like Gee) is a historical realist: he believes that reality exists, but it can only be partially apprehended. Edward Hughes notes that, for Smith, even physical objects “transcend our necessarily incomplete apprehension of them” (Hughes 1986:90). This can be understood in two senses: human ability to define and grasp reality (including the physical world) is limited, but the transcendent world is still real.

Reality also includes divine transcendence.<sup>8</sup> God is real and his reality impinges on humanity, though our perception of God is incomplete, just as surely as the physical world impinges on humanity, though our perception of it is also incomplete. For Smith, it is the “sense of transcendence” (1993:232), the sense of belief in God that presupposes scripture and makes the notion of scripture intelligible. “To study the Bible is to understand it as a channel, which it has observably been, between man

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<sup>8</sup> When working comparatively across religious traditions, Smith often uses the term “divine transcendence” as a more general term for divinity. However, he does not entirely avoid the term “God.” Since my interest is to apply Smith’s theory within a Christian tradition, I will use the term “God” to avoid the confusion that Smith might be referring to something else other than God.

and transcendence. The Bible has not itself transformed lives, but it has introduced men to that which transforms" (Smith 1971:139). Paradoxically, although it is the apprehension of God that presupposes scripture, it is scripture that makes God manifest. Quoting Smith, Burrell (1983:72) interprets the paradox this way: "What God reveals is always Himself." Scripture serves as a channel, not of information, but of the apprehension of God Himself.

Smith's notion of scripture can be further understood when scriptural texts are contrasted with non-scriptural texts. Simply put, scripture without a relationship with God ceases to be scripture. (Smith refers to this as the "de-transcendentalizing" of scripture.) The Bible may be read as literature, as history, as poetry, as prose, and as many different kinds of texts. However, "'scripture' is not a literary genre, but a religio-historical one" (Graham 1987:134). For the Bible to be read *as scripture*, there must be a relationship between the reader and God. Reviewing Smith, Schneiders explains it as the mystery of the mediation of transcendence:

Scripture is not first and foremost a transmission of information about the Transcendent or about humanity or even about the relation between them. It is a mediation of that relationship. In the process of the relationship the text becomes scripture, becomes sacred. Thus, one way the mystery of transcendence enters human experience is in and through a text that focuses that which utterly exceeds it but through which the mystery is encountered (1995:488).

This leads to the epistemological question: what is the relationship of the knower to the known? If our perception and understanding of reality, including God, is incomplete, what can we know and how do we come to know it, and what is scripture's role in this knowledge?

According to Smith, scripture is a three-way relationship between a community,<sup>9</sup> God, and a text. It is not located in any one of the three, but in their relationship. The primary relationship is between a community and God. The text is secondary, and helps a community interpret its relationship to God. In Smith's conception, scripture is not the text; it is the relationship. This is what he means when he says that scripture has no ontology. It exists nowhere but in this special three-way relationship.

Regarding the believing, scripture-practicing community, there are two components of its engagement with God and the sacred text: cumulative tradition and personal faith (Smith 1963). Cumulative tradition is what can be observed about a

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<sup>9</sup> Smith does not define "community." I take community to mean as opposed to individual. Since Smith says that scripture is analogous to language as a mode of communication, I take it to mean that an individual could not have his own private scripture any more than he could have his own private language.

community's relationship with God and text. It is the configuration of the community's social, political, cultural, doctrinal, liturgical, and ecclesiastical history which community members experience in the moment of their engagement with God and the text. This relationship has an observable history that can be documented. The other component to engagement with God and sacred text is unobservable: personal faith. This is where God impinges directly on human life. This can only be inferred by studying the lives of believers and their special relationship with the sacred text (Smith 1963:156, Hughes 1986:10).

This answers the paradigm's methodological question: how should the inquirer go about studying scripture? Since scripture is historically situated, everything that can be gleaned about the community's cumulative tradition of its relationship to God and its text bears on an adequate understanding of scripture. Interpretations and usages of scripture in the present depend on interpretations and usages in the past (Smith 1993:40). The cumulative tradition also includes all those historical processes (social, political, cultural, etc.) which have influenced the community of those who shape their lives around scripture. The study of scripture should examine those processes right up to the present in order to realize a "careful assessment of the actual scriptural life of other people" (Smith 1993:219).

According to Smith, a research methodology for studying scripture must include a personal relationship with the believing community. Scripture is studied to compare not the texts, but the meanings that believers derive from the texts. These meanings are not the propositions of the texts "in the fashion of modern exegesis, 'the meaning of the text', but the meaning of the universe, of world history, of human life: of the readers' own lives as they read, or as they set forth about their affairs after reading" (Smith 1993:34). The researcher must have a personal involvement with the community that s/he studies:

To understand what is in [the believer's] heart, therefore, the student must not merely listen to or read what a believer affirms, but must come to know those qualities of a believer's life that can become known only in that personal two-way relationship known as friendship. ...the knowledge of a person available to another person depends quite basically on the personal relationship between them (Smith 1959:39).

Finally, the study of scripture is not merely the record of observable historical processes in the lives of the believing community. Smith is concerned to understand the unobservable, and his methodology for doing so is necessarily inferential. It builds on historical observations and personal relationships to make inferences about the unobservable, both past and present:

All serious study of man as personal is a study of matters not directly observable. Ideas, ideals, loyalties, passions, aspirations, love, faith, despair, cannot be directly observed, but their role in human history is none the less consequential for that, nor the study of them the less legitimate. The proper study of mankind is by inference (1963:187).

### **Relevance Theory**

Bible translation is part of an interlingual communication process, i.e., meaning is conveyed among people from one language to another. Ernst-August Gutt is a Bible translator who has theorized the *communicative* dimension of translation. In his book *Translation and relevance: cognition and context* (1991b), Gutt has taken Relevance Theory and applied it to explain how communication works across languages. Relevance Theory is a theory of human communication developed by Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson (1986). It is Gutt's explanation of Relevance Theory and its application to translation that is the basis for this introduction.

Relevance Theory differs significantly from the theories of Gee and Smith in that it offers cognitive explanations rather than social explanations of how people make meaning through their interactions. Nevertheless, Relevance Theory has value as an additional theory for explaining where the text of Bible translation fits in a communicative process. Those who are accustomed to cognitive explanations of literacy may feel that social<sup>10</sup> explanations of literacy and scripture do not do justice to the role of text in making meaning. These explanations seem to allow the text to disappear as if by a slight of hand. Relevance Theory brings the text back into the explanation of how meaning is made in communication and this explanation plausibly accounts for how a researcher may temporarily bracket the scripture text as a prop and focus on the social dimensions of literacy and scripture.

Relevance Theory begins with the observation that communication is inferential. According to the theory, communication is successful when 1) a person intends to communicate something, 2) the person produces a stimulus, and 3) the intended audience infers the meaning that the communicator intended to communicate. Communication is inferential in that an audience draws on knowledge that it already possesses in order to interpret the stimulus, in order to take the “correct” meaning, the one that the communicator intended.

Obvious as these insights may seem, the fact that inference plays a central role in human communication has been largely overlooked until quite recently. In fact, the most common and most basic

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<sup>10</sup> Sperber and Wilson (1997) emphasize that they are not “anti-sociological.” Sperber is an anthropologist with a long-standing interest in communication and knowledge (see Sperber 1975, 1985).

assumption about human communication has been that it works by encoding and decoding. We have a thought, or “message,” in our head; we use the rules of a natural language—English, German—to encode this message in a sign or signal, that is, in spoken or written words; we use a medium or channel to transfer it, that is, acoustically or visually. Then the receptor receives the signal and reverses the coding processes: applying the rules of the language to the signal, he or she arrives at the message. (Gutt 1991a)

Relevance Theory is a response to approaches to communication that theorize that the code is the most important element in conveying meaning in communication. To a certain extent such code theories seem like common sense, especially when applied to texts. When dealing with writing as communication, it is common to look for the meaning of the message in the text itself, the visible representation of the code. Relevance Theory observes that while code may play an important role in communication, it is not essential to communication.

Take the example of a wink as communication. A wink may be used to acknowledge someone, to flirt, or to signal deception. Gutt observes that positing code as essential in communication means that a wink somehow encodes meaning, which implies that we could enumerate these representations and that a lexicon could be constructed for all the meanings that a wink could represent. Alternatively, Relevance Theory gives a much simpler explanation: a wink is a stimulus that is interpreted by the audience according to the context at hand. As we shall see below, *context* does not just mean the immediate situation, but also the cultural context of how people use their bodies to signal to one another.

Gutt cites Sperber and Wilson to give an example of how a message may be sent in the form of a text and of how the inferential use of context can allow a person to override and contradict the textual code:

In the Stalin era, two friends in the West were arguing. Paul had decided to emigrate to Russia, which he saw as a land of justice and freedom. He would go and write back to Henry to let him know the beautiful truth. Henry tried to persuade him not to go: there was oppression and misery in Russia, he claimed, goods were scarce, and Paul’s letters would be censored anyhow. Since Paul would not be moved, Henry persuaded him to accept at least the following convention: if Paul wrote back in black ink, Henry would know he was sincere. If he wrote in purple ink, Henry would understand that Paul was not free to report the truth. Six months after Paul’s departure, Henry received the following letter, written in black ink: “Dear Henry, this is the country of justice and freedom. It is a worker’s paradise. In the shops you can find everything you need, with the sole exception of purple ink . . .” (1986:170)

In Relevance Theory, it is not the stimulus alone that carries the communication, but stimulus plus context, where the audience draws on available knowledge to make



inferences. In Relevance Theory, *context* is a broad term referring to all the knowledge that the audience can draw on to make inferences.

A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation. (Sperber and Wilson 1986:15-16 quoted in Gutt 1991a:22)

This broad definition of context allows us to see how Gee's theory of Discourses and Smith's theory scripture can be understood to describe, in terms of Relevance Theory, part of the communicative context. A Discourse is part of that social knowledge that group members draw on to make inferences concerning texts. Similarly in Smith's theory of scripture, a text becomes scriptural when people draw on their group's understanding of God to interpret the text. In both cases, people make inferences concerning texts from the social practices that surround them, where these practices represent part of the social knowledge<sup>11</sup> that the audience can draw on.

Gutt cites Wendland (1987) to illustrate how an audience can correctly understand the meaning of the code (text), but draw inferences entirely different from the intended meaning of the original text. The text is from the Old Testament book of Ruth and the misinterpretation refers to the timing of Ruth's return to her home town: "so Naomi returned from Moab . . . , arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning" (Ruth 1:22, NIV).

Wendland comments on the misinterpretation by the Tonga of Central Africa:

The time reference here is important, since in a Tonga sociocultural setting it would immediately arouse the suspicions of the people whose village Naomi was entering. A person does not usually move during the period extending from after the fields have been planted until after the harvest has been completed. One's crops mean life, and therefore it must have been some serious offense which drove Naomi away from her former home at such a time. Perhaps it had been that she was guilty of practicing witchcraft—after all, were not all her men now dead? (1987:171)

Gutt then comments:

The problem here is not that the translation expresses the wrong meaning. Rather, *the events themselves* that are reported to have happened lead the audience to draw wrong inferences due to culturally conditioned premises. (To make matters worse, several points of the

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<sup>11</sup> *Social* knowledge is redundant, as Wittgenstein has argued that there is no such thing as private knowledge.

story seem to reinforce these wrong inferences.) Thus we see that encoding the right meaning does not guarantee communicative success, and that miscommunication is not necessarily due to wrong encoded meaning. (emphasis in original, 1991a:19)

Relevance Theory gives an additional explanation for why Gee's and Smith's theories are plausible as approaches for studying Bible translation: in effect Gee and Smith are saying that if you want to understand literacy and scripture, do not study them as writing (encoding), reading (decoding), and texts (encoded messages). Rather, these theories call attention to the contextual resources that people call upon to make meaning. Gee advocates looking at how people make meaning with texts in the ways that they organize their behavior and think socially in Discourses. Smith advocates looking at how people make meaning with texts in the ways their social group has historically understood God and how they personally believe him to communicate. Each of these approaches de-emphasizes the role of the text in making meaning. Relevance Theory corroborates these theories in the sense that it also looks elsewhere besides the texts in explaining how meaning is made. However, in contrast to Gee's and Smith's theories, Relevance Theory preserves the text as one important resource of making meaning, even while it does not claim that the text is the only resource for making meaning, or even the most important one. Relevance Theory corroborates these theories by saying the text is important to the *reader* as part of a communicative process, but to the *researcher* it is even more important to understand the context for its power to explain how the reader makes meaning with the text.

#### ***Axiology: Ethics and Values***

At the outset of this chapter axiology was identified as a basic element of a research paradigm, on par with ontology, epistemology and methodology. In considering these theories of literacy, scripture and communication, we have principally considered how they help us to re-frame the nature (ontology) and our understanding (epistemology) of Bible translation. In other words, if Bible translation is characterized as an expression of literacy, scripture or communication, we will gain knowledge about the nature of Bible translation. Having done that, the question remains, what are the values and ethics that govern our inquiry? Are there right and wrong ways to use and interpret texts, and if there are, how do we go about making such judgments? Each of these three theories offers different contributions to the answer to this question.

However, before considering the values that guide us in research, let us define the language that we are using to talk about value. In their ordinary usage, words like *authentic*, *legitimate*, *valid* are synonymous, or at least have overlapping meanings.

In distinguishing the meanings assigned to these words for this study, I draw on Daniel Patte's usage in *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*. Patte begins, "all ordinary readings, which are authentic experiences of the text, should be viewed as reflecting actual meaning producing dimensions of the text and thus as being basically legitimate" (1995:11). So in this formulation, *authentic* means actually experienced (not pretended) and *legitimate* means justifiable (not unreasonable). Patte goes so far as to say that such authentic inferences by readers are to be "welcomed and affirmed...[in order] to discover the meaning-producing dimensions of the text that is reflected by this reading" (emphasis in original, 1995:11).

Legitimacy in Patte's usage has a very cognitive character. It resembles Relevance Theory's emphasis on the inferences that a person draws from a stimulus. In contrast, Patte uses the term *validity* with reference to the value that people put on the "interests and concerns that govern" meaning making. In other words, validity is limited to those who share the same interests, the same ways of making meaning. Validity is inherently limited because there is no one way of producing meaning from a text that is accepted by everyone, precisely because people come to a text with different interests and concerns. To say that interests and validity coincide sounds very much like Gee's theory of making meaning within Discourses.

Used this way, we can speak of particular readings as being valid for specific interested groups. We can speak of valid Baptist readings, valid Catholic readings, valid Christian readings, valid Muslim readings, where each of these readings is understood to have produced its meaning out of the shared interests of the named group. So to compare this use of legitimacy and validity with respect to the interpretation of scripture texts, any interpretation (Baptist, Catholic, Christian, or Muslim) is legitimate if it is authentic (not pretending). However, Baptist interpretations do not have validity for a Catholic (and vice-versa) because they reject the "interests and concerns that govern" each other's ways of making meaning. In terms of the theories presented in this chapter, Baptist Discourse (Gee's theory), the Baptist community's way of relating to God (Smith's theory), the contextual dimensions that Baptists call on to draw inferences from scriptural texts (Relevance Theory) all clash with Catholic ways of doing these things. Because the governing interests that produce the interpretations clash, naturally the interpretations themselves clash.

### ***Gee's Contribution to Axiology***

Gee's theory of Discourses proposes that language and literacy are closely connected with beliefs about how "goods" should be distributed in society. By goods



he means anything that a society regards as desirable, e.g., money, status, power, and identity. Since speaking and reading and writing in certain ways are “natural” to each group in society, if a group is powerful, then its particular ways of speaking and reading and writing could be expected of everyone, and any other group that failed to acquire these ways could be labeled “abnormal.” Goods are naturally distributed to those who act in normal ways and are withheld from those who do not.

Often these beliefs about what is normal are tacit and unexamined because they are embedded in a Discourse, which by its nature, is not self-critical. For example, some people believe that a spoken language is not really a language unless it is also written down, has a published grammar and dictionary, and has an institution to set its standards. This is a tacit belief that has ideological implications: it affects the educational and economic opportunities as well as the identity and self-esteem of those who speak “non-languages.” The insidious aspect of this sort of tacit belief is that those that speak a “non-language” may share the belief that what they speak is not a valid language. According to Gee, it would be the role of the critical theorist to make this tacit belief explicit, and to present alternative theories of what constitutes a language. People may accept or reject these alternative theories, but this process makes overt beliefs that were tacit, and makes clear who are the beneficiaries of such beliefs. This is the crux of Gee’s axiology:

To the extent that ideologies are tacit. . .and self-advantaging they are the root of human evil and leave us complicit with and thus responsible for the evil in the world. We cannot, perhaps, always remove the evil (though we must try), but we can remove our moral complicity. We do this, I believe, by doing a species of linguistics, namely discourse analysis, explicating our tacit. . .ideologies. That is, in fact, why I think linguistics is a moral matter and why, in the end, to me, linguistics matters. (1996:21)

### ***Smith’s Contribution to Axiology***

Smith’s contribution to axiology is that his method of inquiry is through “constructing statements that will be true in more than one tradition simultaneously.” At first this seems to be merely methodological until it is considered in the light of how scripture has tended to be theorized. Smith observes that “the West has long tended to derive its concept of scripture from the Bible” (1993:63). In contrast, Smith advocates discovering those things that practitioners of scripture believe to be true in various traditions and constructing a theory out of the evidence that is larger than any one concept of scripture. He would then test this theory in various traditions to see that it fairly characterized these traditions. Smith would routinely discuss his theories with Christian and Muslim audiences in order to ensure that he had gained an accurate understanding of each tradition (Smith 1981:282).

The ethical importance of this method is highlighted in the light of post-colonial definition of *universalizing*. In post-colonial usage, universalizing is synonymous with Europeanizing because all too often, theoretical claims about what was generally thought to be true were merely extending what was thought to be true in Europe to the rest of the world. By inviting several traditions to participate in theorizing concurrently, Smith offers an alternative to a *hegemonic* way of theorizing, i.e., a way of theorizing “by which the experiences, values, and expectations of a dominant community are held to be true for all humanity” (Ashcroft et al 2000).

### ***Relevance Theory's Contribution to Axiology***

Relevance Theory also makes a contribution to the values that govern the research process. This contribution is the value of faithfulness. This has to do with whether the translation succeeds or fails as communication. When a translator translates a text from one language to another, the translated text is *faithful* if the inferences that the audience draws resemble the translator's understanding of the original text. According to Relevance Theory, translators intend to be faithful in their representations, i.e., create representations that will cause the audience to draw inferences that resemble the original. This is an important value dimension to be weighed in relation to the other values of the researcher. Put simply, the researcher using Relevance Theory is interested whether communication is successful, whether the audience draws the inferences intended by the author of the text. Applied to the transmission of Christianity, the researcher seeks to evaluate the resemblances between what missionaries intended to communicate and the inferences that the audience actually drew.

### ***Conclusion***

Let us summarize and integrate these three theories by considering those who produce Bible translation and those who read it. Drawing on Relevance Theory, the researchers pay attention to the actors and what they are doing as communication. One set of actors includes those producing Bible translation, the purposes they have for introducing it, and the valid ways that they believe that it should be used. The other set of actors is the audience, those who interpret the intentions of the Bible translators. From the perspective of the audience, this has two elements: the stimulus produced by the communicator and all those things that the audience draws upon to make meaning out of the stimulus. In terms of Bible translation research, these two elements correspond to the text and the meaning people make of it from their context.

It is important to see that the missions introducing Bible translation were introducing both textual resources and contextual resources. Each text translated added to the body of material available to be interpreted; while at the same time the missionaries had expectations that there were valid ways to interpret these texts. Missionaries had a role in producing and distributing the translations (textual resources), as well as influencing the knowledge and practice of how the audience would produce valid meanings from the texts (contextual resources).

Smith locates scripture, not in the text, but in what Relevance Theory would call the context. Smith cites the contextual dimension of a community's relation with God as the most important thing to be studied in order to understand a text as scripture. The text is not determinative for scripture because any text could be de-transcendentalized, i.e., the audience could lose its relationship with God and the text would no longer be scripture. In order to study scripture, the researcher examines the cumulative traditions plus the expressions of personal faith in a scriptural community.

Gee also locates Discourses in what Relevance Theory would call context. The researcher studies the Discourse because the text makes no sense outside of a Discourse. Communicative stimuli do not float about separated from the communicators and audiences, and neither do texts. By treating the text as a prop, the researcher overcomes the strong predisposition that the meaning is carried by the text.

These three theories, applied together, can generate concrete and specific research questions for studying Bible translation in its role in the transmission of Christianity in Cameroon. If one imagines those missionaries who introduced Christianity to Cameroon as a group (or series of groups), what evidence do we have about their intents concerning Bible translation? What did they think that they were communicating and where did Bible translation fit in their communication strategies? What were the normal ways that missionaries, and later Cameroonian Christians, used texts in their lives, especially those texts that constitute the Bible? What inferences concerning Bible translation did Cameroonians draw from the missionaries? What conclusions did Cameroonians come to concerning the valid ways for using literacy and Bible translation as Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Churches of Christ?

In addition to imagining the transmission of Christianity as a grand communication process carried out through history by denominational organizations, one can also imagine that the texts themselves were stimuli in a long series of

communication events. This leads to the question, what were the textual resources that audiences had available to them for drawing inferences about scripture? In which languages were these texts available to Cameroonian audiences over the history of the introduction of Bible translations into Cameroon? Here the whole gamut of available texts is relevant, from Bible translations to non-biblical materials such as hymnals, catechisms, and primers.

Likewise, if the texts were the stimuli in a communication process, what were the contexts that audiences drew upon to interpret those texts? As mentioned earlier, *context* is a broad concept including all the sources of knowledge that an audience calls on to draw inferences. This includes the local cultural background of the Cameroonians as well as the immediate situations and practices in which the texts were used. Context is not a static concept, nor does it remain outside of the influences of those doing the communicating. For example, at the same time as texts were introduced as stimuli in the communication of Christianity, audiences were also taught how to read and interpret these texts. Their *contextual resources* for making meaning from texts were expanded at the same time as audiences were receiving the Bible translation texts. Obviously those who introduced the translations had a significant influence on how the texts should be validly used and understood. What were the interests of those who introduced Bible translation and Christianity to Cameroon, and what were the interests of their audiences? These are among the questions that this study will consider.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Description of the Research Setting and Method**

#### ***Introduction***

Chapter One established a theoretical basis on which scripture may be studied as through the perspective of social practices that relate to texts. The present chapter describes the procedures that this research project has employed to implement a research methodology designed to focus on social practices. It also introduces the research setting, locating it in its geographical, linguistic, and religious settings in Cameroon where it was conducted. It describes how the research was conducted and locates the method in its tradition of ethnographic research. It also considers the role of the researcher and how issues of subjectivity were managed.

The central question motivating this research is what can be learned about scripture when it is studied not as a text, but in terms of “scripture events,” i.e., practices that reflect the ways in which people relate to scripture and interpret its meanings. The research pursues two agendas simultaneously. First, it accepts the thesis that Christianity is not inherently a “Western” religion (Bediako 1995; Walls 1996), and therefore manifests qualities drawn from its “non-Western” contexts. In this agenda, the research inquires into the characteristics of Christianity in a particular Cameroonian community in order to understand one specific expression of Christianity among many such expressions in Africa. Second, the research accepts the thesis, set forth in Chapter One, that literacy is not a universally equivalent activity, and—like Christianity—it needs to be studied and understood in the immense variety of local cultures in which literacy practices find their relevance. These two agendas combine to motivate an investigation of how our understanding of non-Western Christianity may be enlarged by studying churches in an African setting through their practices surrounding scripture texts.

#### ***Location of Research Setting***

The Nso' situation in Cameroon was chosen as a research setting because it offered an opportunity to study African churches whose members were using a Bible translation in their own African language. The Lamnso' New Testament had been in circulation for about 20 years. A draft of the New Testament translation was circulated among the Nso' churches in 1983, and the final first edition of the New Testament was published in 1990. Reading classes for Lamnso' literacy instruction have been offered in various forms for adults and children from the early 1980's. The



availability of Lamnso' literacy instruction and copies of the New Testament over a 20 year period offered the possibility that the use of the Lamnso' New Testament had become an established practice. In effect, there was preliminary evidence that literacy practices surrounding the Lamnso' New Testament existed to be studied. Moreover, the four Christian denominations' current cooperation on a Lamnso' Old Testament translation project was further evidence of the importance that these churches attached to having a complete Bible in their own language.

Another reason for choosing the Nso' Bible translation situation was that it was accessible for conducting research, in the first instance, through the practical assistance of SIL International. SIL has been conducting Bible translation programs in Cameroon since 1963. When I inquired about research locations for studying literacy and Bible translation, the SIL administration in Cameroon recommended the Nso' situation. Through the SIL consultant who had worked in Nso' since 1972 came practical advice about accommodations and an introduction to the Nso' man who was the Coordinator of the Lamnso' Old Testament Project.<sup>1</sup> From this contact came further advice and introductions that eventually resulted in an opportunity to live and do research in the village of Bamkov. Furthermore, the research setting was linguistically accessible. The area where Lamnso' is spoken is located in a province of Cameroon where English is the official language. This allowed me to begin making arrangements for research, including explaining my purpose for being in Cameroon, using English to communicate.

The village of Bamkov was recommended<sup>2</sup> as a site where I could reside and observe the Lamnso' New Testament in use. In actuality, it offered an unforeseen opportunity for research: whereas I was looking for one local church to study scripture practices in their historical and cultural context, in Bamkov there were *six* churches which were using the Lamnso' Bible translation: a large Catholic church, a small Catholic church, a Presbyterian church, a Baptist church, and two Church of Christ churches. As it happened, these were also the four denominations that supported the ongoing Lamnso' Old Testament Project and the only Christian denominations that had churches widely distributed throughout Nso'. This represented an opportunity and a challenge because instead of gaining access to one

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<sup>1</sup> This translation project is administrated under the auspices of CABTAL (Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy).

<sup>2</sup> The SIL consultant who recommended Bamkov as a research site cautioned that he made no claims that churches in the village of Bamkov were representative of how the Bible translation was being used throughout Nso'.



research situation, I had to decide where I would put my efforts among these six different sites. This is where the language situation helped to make this decision.

In general, fluency in English was limited among people in Bamkov. Most knew a little Pidgin and less English. Lamnso' was the language everyone knew best. This presented a problem: I was learning Lamnso' but still a long way from being able to conduct interviews in Lamnso'. This notwithstanding, I proceeded to visit each church in Bamkov and followed it up with a visit to whoever was conducting the use of scripture in the service. These visits developed to become a significant data-gathering strategy because, not coincidentally, most of these leaders were sufficiently fluent in English to be able to answer my questions. (For those who were not fluent in English, I acquired help to translate interviews.) Over time and successive visits I developed rapports with these people and a corpus of data emerged that focused on the specialized knowledge of those who were using scripture in each church.

### **Geographic Setting**

Bamkov is located in the linguistic/geographic area of Nso', the ethnic homeland where the Lamnso' language is learned in the home and spoken in the community. Nso' occupies much of the Bui Division of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, but the linguistic boundaries do not correspond exactly with any of the divisional political jurisdictions within the province. The route to Nso' from Bamenda (the capital and largest city of the Northwest Province) goes northeast on the main Ring Road, which circles the Northwest Province and connects the major towns of Nso' (see Figure 1). The elevation varies considerably along the route; beginning at Bamenda (4,400 ft.) it climbs over the Sabga pass (5,400 ft.) and back down and across the Ndop plain (4,000 ft.) and then back up to the rugged, mountainous area where Bamkov (6,400 ft.) is located near the town of Kumbo (5,500 ft.). This region of the Northwest Province is also known as the *Grassfields*, for its high treeless plateaus with tall savannah grass.

Kumbo is the largest town in Nso', with a population of 60,000 (Goheen 1996:36), and it is the center of governmental and commercial affairs for the area. It is the capital of the Bui Division, the political jurisdiction one level down from the province. It is also where the palace of the *Fon*<sup>3</sup> is located, the hereditary ruler of the Nso' people. Kumbo has many shops and a large market where people bring their

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<sup>3</sup> *Fon* is a title for a traditional hereditary leader, sometimes translated as *chief* or *king*, used among the ethnic groups in the Grassfields.

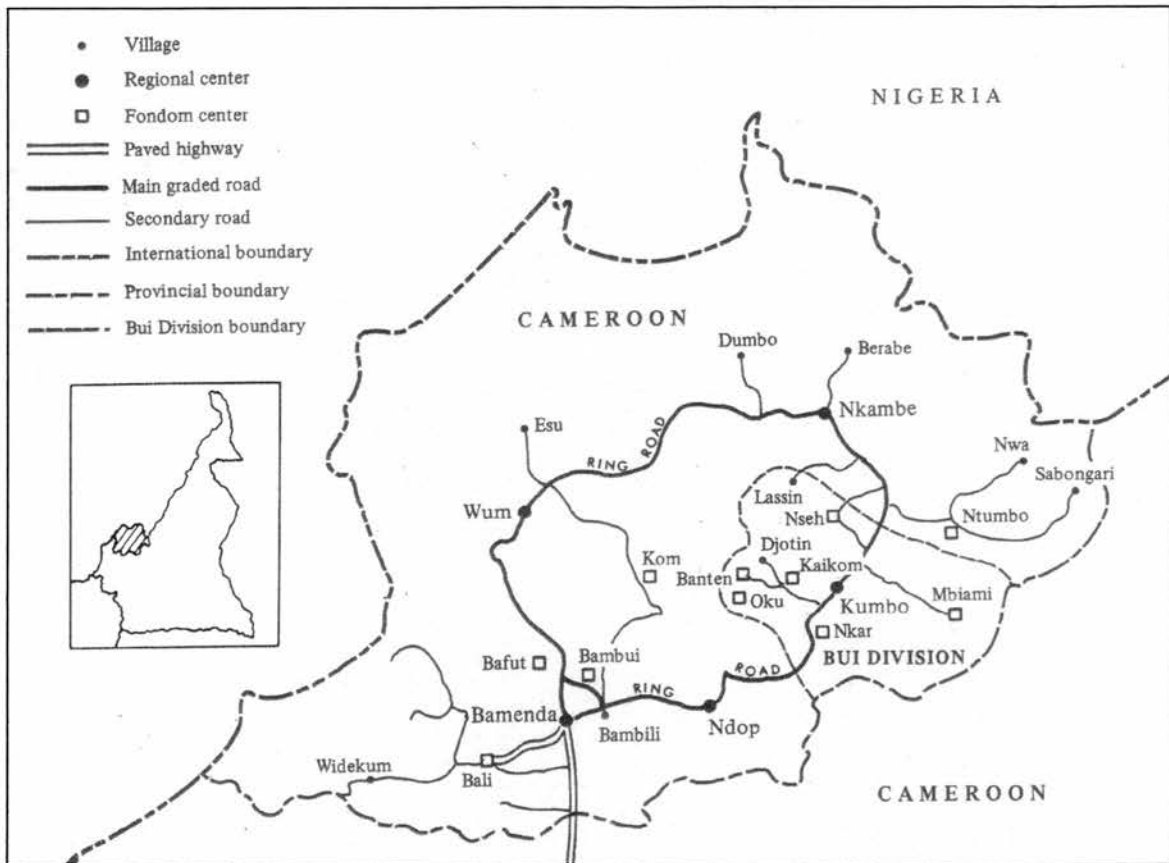


Fig. 1. Northwest Province, Cameroon (Goheen 1988; inset Ngwa 1985)

agricultural produce to sell on market days. It has a concentration of services not found elsewhere in a largely rural region, such as two hospitals, several banks, and Internet cafes. Kumbo is also where the offices of the leaders of each of the denominations of the four churches examined in this study are located: the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kumbo, the Presbytery Secretary of the Presbyterian Presbytery of Bui, the Field Pastor of the Baptist Nso' Field, and the Evangelist for the Churches of Christ office and Bible school.

Bamkov is one of many villages in the hills surrounding the town of Kumbo. According to Goheen (1996), eighty-five percent of the Nso' population lives in rural circumstances outside of the towns on the Ring Road. The road passes through Bamkov, but most of the inhabitants of Bamkov live in compounds reached by unpaved paths, lanes and roads that crisscross the area surrounding Kumbo. A census<sup>4</sup> conducted in 1995 listed the total population of Bamkov as 2,732.

<sup>4</sup> The Cameroon Baptist Convention's Life Abundant Primary Health Programme (LAP 1995) conducted a detailed census of each household in Bamkov in 1995, as the Baptists were considering whether to establish a primary care health facility in Bamkov.

## ***Linguistic Setting***

Lamnso' is one of 279 languages identified in Cameroon (Grimes 2000). Because of their size and political importance, the Nso' have been prominent among the linguistic<sup>5</sup> groups in the Grassfields region. They were a dominant group in the Grassfields when the Germans arrived in force at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with an estimated population of 60,000 (Goheen 1996). Because the location of Nso' communities does not coincide with divisional political boundaries, it is difficult to estimate the present total number of Lamnso' speakers. Current published population estimates range from 125,000 (Grimes 2000) to 200,000 (Goheen 1996), making it one of the largest language groups in the Northwest Province.

Virtually everyone who lives in Bamkov speaks Lamnso' as their mother-tongue. According to the LAP (1995) census figures only seven Bamkov residents were not Nso'. Lamnso' is therefore the normal language of interaction in the area. This appeared to be true in nearly every domain<sup>6</sup> of daily life: when Lamnso' speakers gather they speak Lamnso', and only when interacting with a non-speaker of Lamnso' would they switch to a language they had in common, usually either Pidgin or English. Thus Lamnso' is normally spoken in the home and village environs, and since there are so few non-Lamnso' speakers present, children have little exposure to any other languages until they begin school.

Since the use of Pidgin will be discussed extensively in this study, a few introductory remarks concerning this language are in order. Pidgin is a *pidgin*, that is, a second language for those who use it.

Pidgins are no one's mother tongue. They are used primarily in trading or plantation situations. In plantation settings, their main function is to enable workers to communicate with each other, since plantation laborers very often do not speak the same language. (Fasold 1990:180)

The Pidgin used in Cameroon was in widespread use along the west coast of Africa as early as 1800, first as a trading language, and then as a plantation language (Huber 1999:44). Migrant laborers who came from elsewhere along the coast of West Africa may well have spoken a version of Pidgin before they arrived in Cameroon.

There is conflicting data as to how widespread Pidgin was in the interior by the time the British régime began its tenure in Cameroon. A 1923 report to the League of

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<sup>5</sup> This family of languages is generally referred to as *Grassfields Bantu*. The specific linguistic classification for Lamnso' is Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Ring, East (Grimes 2000).

<sup>6</sup> The exception to this is the domain of school. This is discussed in Chapter Four.

Nations claimed that Pidgin was “widespread, even in the remotest districts” (United Kingdom 1923:43). While it may have been strictly true that there were some who knew Pidgin living in remote areas, it is probably misleading as a generalization of the extent of its usage in the interior. One Catholic missionary gives a more plausible description when he notes that in the Bamenda Division, Pidgin was not known by women, children, and most “untravelling” men, implying that only those men who had been to the coast had the opportunity to learn Pidgin (Rogan 1928a). So at the beginning of the British colonial period, Pidgin would have had limited utility in the interior; its principal use would have been as a means of intertribal communication among men who had been to the coast and as a means of communicating with Europeans.

Even though many English-speaking missionaries began interacting with Cameroonians in Pidgin immediately upon arrival, they often learned later that their immediate impression of comprehension could have been misleading. One missionary gave the following example:

A typical expression is: when you ask your boy to find a collar stud or something else, he often comes back and says: “me find im and no look im”. [I looked for it and did not find it.] (Stokman 1928)

Pidgin has a number of words whose meanings have shifted from their original English derivation. As this example illustrates, the Pidgin word *find* means “to look for” and the word *look* means “to find” (Bellama et al 1983:iii).

Europeans used a number of colloquial terms to distinguish Pidgin from Standard English.<sup>7</sup> Along with the term “pidgin English,” they also referred to it as “broken English” and “bush English.” These terms illustrate the condescending attitude that Standard English speakers had towards Pidgin.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Standard English was referred to as “ordinary English,” “pure English,” “high English,” and “Sasse English,” the latter reference being to the place in Victoria Division where the oldest and largest Catholic Mission school was located.

In the present day, Pidgin and English are the two languages used in the Northwest Province among locals who speak different languages. In his study of English in Cameroon, Wolf (2001) heuristically draws a line between Pidgin and

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<sup>7</sup> Linguists sometimes use the term *Standard English* to refer to a particular dialect of English (Thomas 1999). However, in this study *Standard English* is simply used to denote the English language, as opposed to Pidgin English.

<sup>8</sup> Vernon-Jackson expresses an English speaker’s view when he claims that there was “no prestige attached to “pidgin” as a language. . . . Cameroonians, other Africans, and English visitors regarded it as no more than a convenience, a tool for commerce” (Vernon-Jackson 1967:2).

English, but in reality characterizes them as on a continuum where the extremes are not mutually intelligible, but towards the center of the continuum “some users cannot even distinguish between educated CPE [Cameroon Pidgin English] and SE [Standard English] in their own usage and still less in other people’s” (Mbassi-Manga 1973:360 cited in Wolf 2001:196). Pidgin is learned through contact with non-Lamnso’ speakers in taxis, shops, banks, hospitals, and other public places in the town of Kumbo. It is primarily oral in its usage and there are no instruction programs for learning Pidgin. English, on the other hand, is learned in school, where it is acquired in oral and literate modes. However, since many primary teachers themselves have had limited education, oral or literate proficiency in English is often not acquired until the secondary grades, if at all (Wolf 2001:203). (The development of written Pidgin by the Catholic Church will be discussed in Chapter Three. The influence of schools as sites of literacy acquisition will be discussed further in Chapter Four.)

### ***Religious Setting***

The villagers of Bamkov are predominately Christian or Muslim. In the census data, there were very few who did not affiliate themselves with one of these two religions. See Table 1 based on the LAP census.

Religion	Number of adherents
Christian	2112 (77%)
Muslim	586 (21%)
Other	34 (1.2%)
Total	2732

**Table 1. Religious Distribution in Bamkov (LAP 1995)**

The great majority of the Christians among the Bamkov villagers are either Catholic or Presbyterian (founded by the Basel Mission). These are also the oldest churches in the area. The three smallest churches are named after quarters within Bamkov in order to distinguish them from others in the same denomination. See Table 2 compiled from information supplied by each denomination.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Sargwen*, *Taakay*, and *Rookay* are pseudonyms for place-names of various quarters within Bamkov. The discrepancy between the number of Christians in Bamkov (2112) in Table 1 and the total number

Churches by denomination	Members
Catholic (Main)	1500
Catholic (Sargwen)	60
Presbyterian	621
Baptist	180
Church of Christ (Taakay)	12
Church of Christ (Rookay)	6

**Table 2. Population of Churches in Bamkov**

The churches in the three largest denominations belong to larger organizational entities pertaining to their denomination. The two Catholic churches in Bamkov belong to a parish with a total of twelve churches (Aki 2002). There are sixteen parishes in the Diocese of Kumbo with a total of 138,324 Catholic members. There are 63 priests assigned to the Diocese of Kumbo; 31 of these are native speakers of Lamnso'. Another six priests have learned to speak Lamnso' to some degree.

The Presbyterian Church in Bamkov belongs to a parish with a total of six churches. There are eighteen parishes in the Presbytery of Bui with a total of 8,712 members. According to the census provided by the Presbytery Secretary, there are 21 pastors or evangelists assigned to the Presbytery of Bui; 11 of these are native speakers of Lamnso', and one additional pastor has learned to speak Lamnso'.

The Baptist Church in Bamkov has a decentralized, congregational form of governance. However, it is represented in the Cameroon Baptist Convention through its regional field, which is overseen by a Field Pastor. According to the Field Pastor, there are 55 Baptist churches that belong to the Nso Field with a total of 3,676 members. There are 23 pastors in the Nso Field; 19 of these speak Lamnso'.

The two Church of Christ congregations in Bamkov are under no official jurisdiction with respect to any denominational structure. Each church keeps a record of attendance, but it does not report the count to any larger body. However, at my request, the administrator for the Kumbo office compiled a list of Nso' churches with an estimate of their membership. There are a total of 311 members among 22 congregations. These are all led by local Lamnso' speakers.

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of members in the churches in Bamkov (2389) in Table 2 may be accounted for by members who are resident outside of Bamkov.



The sizes of the churches in Bamkov correspond to the relative sizes of the denominations in Nso', e.g., the Catholic Church is the largest church in Bamkov and it is also the largest denomination in Nso', etc. The two larger denominations, Catholic and Presbyterian, are more linguistically diverse in their leadership. Priests and pastors in these denominations may be assigned outside of their home language area after seminary. The Baptist and Church of Christ churches draw their leadership from local sources and fewer have seminary training. Thus they are more linguistically homogeneous.

### ***Economic Setting***

Most of the villagers in Bamkov grow their own food<sup>10</sup> in gardens and fields within walking distance of their compounds. When under cultivation during the rainy season, Bamkov and its surroundings appear densely farmed. Virtually every square foot has been identified in terms of the right of cultivation and what it can produce. Some fields are continually cultivated for food crops while other areas are known to be too rocky or steep to plant anything besides trees, which are used for firewood for cooking. All clearing, cultivation, planting, and harvesting is done by hand; no one uses animals or tractors for these tasks. The one common mechanized implement is a mill for grinding maize, which is a staple in the diet.

Cash is scarce in the local economy. Most people eat what they or their families produce in their gardens and fields, so they do not need to buy their food. But everyone needs some cash to buy goods or to pay school or hospital fees. Some sell their excess produce at local markets. Others work as day laborers in local building projects. A few commute to work in shops and trades in Kumbo.

For market and work reasons, there is a lot of daily travel between Bamkov and Kumbo. Most people walk back and forth, but those who can afford to do so, ride and transport their goods to market in taxis that work the routes between Bamkov and Kumbo. Because people can afford to pay so little for transportation, rates are low but the vehicles are overloaded, with eight to ten people commonly traveling in a five-passenger vehicle. On a number of occasions taxi drivers were witnessed sharing a seat in order to accommodate an additional passenger. These details illustrate the fact that Bamkov villagers live in an economy where agricultural goods are plentiful enough for people to feed themselves, but the margin of cash available for buying goods, including books, is narrow.

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<sup>10</sup> According to Goheen's (1996:26) study of Nso' agricultural economics, Nso' lies within a fertile region "targeted for by the national government for development as a breadbasket for the growing national urban centers."

## ***Essentials of Ethnographic Research***

This study used the ethnographic tradition of research as its strategy of inquiry. Shirley Brice Heath (1982), an anthropologist who has studied literacy in community environments, formulates what she considers to be the essentials of an ethnographic approach to research. Among the tenets that she considers essential are attention to the units of study, identification of cultural patterns, participant observation, ethnohistorical research, and holistic approach. We will use Heath's formulation to explain how the research reported in this thesis was undertaken.

### ***Unit of Analysis***

A unit of analysis specifies what is being studied (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:119). Applying the theories of literacy and scripture described in Chapter One, the text itself is explicitly not the unit of analysis. Instead, the focus of this research was on the circumstances surrounding the use of texts as defined by the *literacy event*: “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and interpretive processes” (Heath 1982:50). This unit of analysis serves to focus our attention on what is happening in the presence of texts, and the role they play in the participants' activities. This is a useful unit of analysis because it allows the researcher to consider practices not included in normal definitions of reading and writing. For instance, if a person recites a text from memory, whether he is actually reading it or not, that would be a literacy event. Likewise, if a person holds a hymnal upside-down while singing in church, that is also a literacy event. The important question is not whether the person is actually decoding text, but whether writing is somehow integral to their behavior.

Applied to the research contexts of this study, the literacy event was a necessary criterion for what counts for data. Much of this study focused on the observation of what people did during church services. For example, participants in the Bamkov Catholic and Presbyterian churches practiced liturgical recitation during their services without immediate reference to any books. If the unit of analysis required contemporaneous reading, these activities would be excluded from consideration as relevant data. But by framing the question as, “Does a text have a relationship to this activity?”, texts are discovered to have a role in people's behavior that might not be considered if reading skill was the sole focus.

### ***Identification of Cultural Patterns***

According to Heath, “the ethnographer's task is to describe the culture of the group being studied, and to identify specific cultural patterns and structural

regularities within the processes of continuity and change” (1982:35). James Spradley (1979), another anthropologist, describes three sources for drawing ethnographic inferences: what people say, the way people act, and the artifacts people use. The literacy event begins with the text as cultural artifact, but text only defines the setting. It is the cultural meanings that are the real interest of the ethnographer, and these are derived from observing people using texts, and from people's descriptions of what it means to use a text. It is the patterns surrounding literacy events that are of interest to ethnographic research.

In this sense, an ethnographic strategy is an *inductive* approach to building cultural theories. After observing what people do, the ethnographer first seeks to discover the explanations that people themselves give for their own behavior. Only after the people's own explanation has been established will the ethnographer then, at a later stage, offer his own further analysis of what is happening. (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:1-2). The emphasis is on participants' perspectives, in order to construct a theorized account of the culture that reflects the point of view of those inside the culture (Spradley 1980:56). Ethnography does not seek to *test* a hypothesis that is advanced prior to research, but to *produce* a hypothesis as a result of the research, as a proposal for theorizing about what has been discovered (Holliday 2002:35).

The present study proceeded as an inductive approach to discover the meanings that Nso' Christians assign to Bible translation. It examines the meanings that people assign to Lamnso', Pidgin, and English translations of the Bible, without advancing a hypothesis as to the particular shape these meanings might take. After initial inquiry, it was discovered that the social meanings and practices surrounding Bible translation varied significantly from one denomination to another, and the research proceeded to compare the divergent shapes that scripture practice took among the different churches. The result is a hypothesis that theorizes the character of scripture in one Nso' community, taking into account the diverse literacy practices encountered in all the churches.

#### ***Participant Observation and Interviews***

Because the ethnographer seeks to understand the meaning of an activity from the perspective of a person who performs it, participant observation is an important research technique. By becoming a participant, the researcher calls on learning strategies that everyone has for discerning what is happening in a new situation. The participant does not merely observe, but asks questions and tries to act in appropriate ways in the situation. As McDermott remarked, “You have to know what's going on

to participate” (Barton et al 2000:xii). Participation forces the researcher to engage as a learner who does not just watch, but enters into the activity being studied.

For example, I had to learn how to behave when I attended Bamkov church services as a participant. Following cues from other participants, I sat, stood, sang hymns, and went forward to give an offering along with everyone else. Sometimes I had to be prompted or corrected in order to learn the proper way to act. In my first visit to a Churches of Christ church, I accepted the offer of communion, only subsequently to find out that I should have refused because normally only members of the church take communion. Shortly thereafter while attending a Presbyterian service, I declined to go forward for communion (so as not to make the same mistake twice), only to be approached by the pastor after the service to find out if there was some reason why I did not participate. When the pastor realized that I declined out of uncertainty, he offered to serve me communion on the spot. In each church tradition in Bamkov I learned the appropriate ways to act by observing and interacting with other participants.

After each service, I contacted people whom I observed to be central to the literacy events. In each church there were usually one or two people who were reading during services or interpreting the texts that were read. It was with these people that I developed relationships which allowed me eventually to interview them. This was an opportunity to explore questions that could not be asked during the services. It also gave the interviewees opportunity to explain in their own words how they understood what was happening in the services. Table 3 identifies the distribution by denomination of those who were interviewed.

### ***Ethnohistorical Research***

Ethnohistorical research is another tenet of Heath's formulation of what constitutes ethnographic research. This inquires into cultural patterns that may have pertained prior to the time of research, and may have affected current practices that the researcher encounters. In this case, the patterns of scripture use in Bamkov—the languages they choose, the manner in which they choose to read texts, and the meanings that they assign to the texts—have a history that illuminates their present usages. Each denomination has been influenced by historical processes that affect what it means to use and understand a scripture text in a valid way. These historical influences come from a number of sources. One source is the history of the church itself; this takes account of how the denominational institution with which the church is affiliated has traditionally understood the role and meaning of scripture texts. Another source is the history of the schooling institutions of that denomination, and

how it understands the nature of education. Both of these historical influences on literacy use are explored in this study.

Denomination	Position	Pseudonym	Location
Catholic	Parish Priest	Raphael	Bamkov
	Bamkov Catechist	Rachael	Bamkov
	Sargwen Catechist	Roland	Bamkov
	Vicar General for Bishop of Kumbo	Roger	Kumbo Office
Presbyterian	Pastor	Philip	Bamkov
	Subsequent Pastor	Patrick	Bamkov
	Church Secretary	Pius	Bamkov
	Retired Catechist	Polycarp	Bamkov
	Presbytery Secretary	Not cited	Kumbo Office
Baptist	Pastor	Bernard	Bamkov
	Youth Leader	Benjamin	Bamkov
	Sunday School Teacher	Beatrice	Bamkov
	Field Pastor	Not cited	Kumbo Office
Church of Christ	Taakay Church Leader	Cornelius	Bamkov
	Rookay Church Leader	Chrysanthus	Bamkov
	Evangelist	Charles	Kumbo Office

**Table 3. Distribution of Interviews**

For each of the Christian traditions represented in Bamkov, documents were collected and historical studies consulted in order to understand each denomination’s history in Cameroon, especially with regard to the use of local literacy and Bible translation. In addition to the analysis of historical documents, older church members were interviewed for historical insights concerning their church's previous literacy practices, language policies, and Bible translation within their tradition.



In addition to a documentary analysis of the organizational past of the churches in Bamkov, the research included documents pertaining to their current organization. These were scrutinized with an eye to how they both corroborate and question data collected in Bamkov by other means. For example, one day while I was visiting in the home of the Presbyterian pastor, I noticed a 2003 calendar sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). Among the pictures of the leadership of this denomination was one of a woman who was the president of the Basel Mission, which is the mission that founded the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The local Presbyterian Church was the only one of the four in Bamkov that belonged to a denomination that ordains women, and it was the only church in Bamkov in which women were observed preaching. The calendar thus provided evidence that suggests that denominational policy to include women in leadership that was influenced from outside Cameroon. As a reference point, it thus provided a larger context that corroborated what was observed at the local level.

### ***Holistic Approach***

When Heath referred to a *holistic approach* as a tenet of ethnography in education, she meant that the details of the literacy events in classroom settings should be coordinated with “the study of communities and other institutions related to the school” (1982:39). She was concerned that an ethnographic study of a classroom “culture” would have too narrow a focus if it did not also include the local community as a larger context. A holistic approach requires a balance between the data of the immediate research setting and the larger institutional relationships that influence literacy practices in that setting.

Because NLS emphasizes the diversity of literacy practices, its research focuses on local<sup>11</sup> expressions of literacy. The pluralizing of literacies emphasizes that the creation and use of texts is situated in a specific local context, the role of the researcher being to discover the patterns that operate in this context. Ethnographers use these patterns of meaning to build “local cultural theories” that explain the “group patterns of behavior or belief” of the people they are studying (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:21). However, to emphasize the local nature of ethnographic research—local data and local-built theories—does not exclude the consideration of data and theories from elsewhere. By advocating a holistic approach, Heath brings to our attention the importance of looking beyond the immediate—whether it is the

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<sup>11</sup> The title of one major NLS work is *Local Literacies* (Barton and Hamilton 1998).



immediate research setting or the immediate community—as a context for interpreting behavior.

In this study, a holistic approach means examining the influence of other institutions on present Bamkov church literacy practice. The principal institutions considered are the mission organizations that established the four churches studied in this thesis, the British colonial administration, and the school institutions as they presently exist in Cameroon. These institutions are examined for how they have influenced and continue to influence the language choices and literacy practices in the Bamkov churches.

### ***Managing Subjectivity***

The research method used in this study does not attempt objectivity in a “strong” formulation of its definition.<sup>12</sup> Rather, it follows Holliday’s description of qualitative method, which achieves methodological rigor through strategies which manage subjectivity. One strategy for managing subjectivity is reflexivity, that is, to cultivate an awareness of one’s own influence on the research. One concern during observational data gathering was how I influenced the research setting by my presence. For example, when I visited churches it was always a concern to try to get the participants to “act normally,” i.e., conduct the service as much as possible as if I was not present. Often the church leaders wished to add an English translation for everything that was said in Lamnso’, for my sake. Since I was the only person present who needed an English translation, I discouraged this because, on balance, I preferred to observe what was happening when speakers were focused on their Lamnso’-speaking audience. I did not want them to focus on me as an audience, even though I didn’t understand much of what was said in Lamnso’.

Sometimes it was not so obvious how I was changing people’s behavior. I found out about one such incident in a Catholic service after the fact. The Bamkov Catholic service is quite linguistically complicated in that it has many discrete liturgical items (Our Father, Kyrie, Sanctus, etc.), and the principles for language choices (among English, Pidgin and Lamnso’) for each item were not immediately obvious. After consultation with several priests, I worked out a list of all the items in the service and a theory for how language choices were being made between Lamnso’, Pidgin, and English. I attended a Sunday Mass in Bamkov with my list in hand, noting the

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<sup>12</sup> Objectivity has a range of meanings. Bernstein (1983:8) offers a “strong” formulation: “The basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.”

language of each item. Later in the week I visited the parish priest in his office in order to follow up what I had observed on Sunday. I went through each item on my list and the language choices that were made, and there were two items (prayers that he had recited at the beginning and end) that were problematic. I could not account for why they were said in English when I would have expected them to be in Lamnso'. When I asked the priest why he did not recite these in Lamnso', he replied that he had said these in English because he did not want me to feel entirely left out of the service. In terms of managing subjectivity, I do not interpret this incident to mean that my presence invalidated the data that I collected in that service. Rather, by reflecting on the influence of my presence, it added to my understanding that the priest had the ability to include visitors in his language decisions.

Another aspect of reflexivity is awareness of one's own ideologies and how they affect interpretations of the data. It is difficult to be aware of one's own biases, but one bias I am aware of is my predisposition towards comprehension over non-comprehension in matters of literacy and language: I believe that it is better for an audience to understand what it recites or hears said (or read), than not to understand it. In this regard I value the mother tongue in oral and literate discourse because it is usually the language that is best understood; among second languages, I similarly value the one that is best understood by the audience. So in assessing the use of languages among the churches in Bamkov in my value system, I would rank Lamnso' highest, then Pidgin, and lastly English on the criterion of their value in comprehensibility among Lamnso' speakers. I also have a conviction, shared by many linguists, that one language is not intrinsically better than another. This is not a neutral or objective belief, but it is consistent with my ideology that the best language is the one that is best understood. As we shall see in this study, not everyone in Bamkov shares this ideology.

Another strategy for managing subjectivity is to connect diverse sources of data. This is sometimes referred to as *triangulation*, "confirming or cross-checking the accuracy of data obtained from one source with data collected from other, different sources" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:139). In this study data was collected from historical sources, participant observation, interviews and document artifacts, the focus always being placed on the practices that surround Bible translation in the Bamkov churches. The information was gathered in function of constructing an interpretation of the way Bible translation is to be understood in these churches, through these practices. Because each church in Bamkov is assumed to be part of a larger denominational history and culture, local data is connected with denominational data gathered elsewhere. For example, as noted in Table 3,

denominational leaders were consulted in their Kumbo offices, and these data sources are used to confirm interpretations of data collected in Bamkov.

### ***Interpretation of the Data***

The analysis of the data proceeded in an iterative fashion. It began with research questions derived from theories presented in Chapter One. These questions informed historical research on the language choices of the missionaries to Cameroon. This analysis became background for further research into language choices in present day sites of scripture used in Bamkov, and how those historical usages influence current practices surrounding scripture. This was followed by interviews that allowed the local people's own interpretation of their scripture practices to emerge. This produced data concerning the participants' own perceptions concerning significant differences among the churches, and also required more visits to the churches as observational follow up to confirm what the interviewees' had said. The analysis of the data therefore sought to compare the features that emerged among the four Bamkov churches in terms of their similarities and dissimilarities.

The result of this method is an interpretation whose strength lies in the connections between the theories and data sources. Some of the data is drawn from the Bamkov church members' own knowledge, since "social researchers' knowledge is and must be constructed out of subjects' own knowledge" (Cameron et al 1994:25); only thus can the interpretation of the social researcher aspire to being a credible portrayal of a local expression of what is observed—in this case, the way that Bamkov Christians relate to biblical scripture as the core of their Christianity. Some of the data is drawn from historical sources distant in time and space from the Bamkov research setting; its importance lies in charting the influences that bear on the present practices in Bamkov. The themes drawn from this data, connected by its relevance to the Bamkov setting, are the basis for the next three chapters.

In this chapter we have been able to set the scene of this study, describing its location in geographical, linguistic, religious and economic terms. We have also mapped out the various aspects of its research methodology, which is essentially ethnographic. In the next chapter we can therefore proceed to describe the historical background in more detail, concentrating on the antecedents affecting the production and use of the Lamnso' Bible translation.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Development of Cameroonian Languages Antecedent to Bible Translation and Literacy Among the Nso'**

#### ***Introduction***

The use of Bible translation requires some previous development of the written form of the language: an orthography devised, materials prepared, and literacy instruction programs conducted. This chapter examines the record of the development of Cameroonian languages antecedent to and including the development of Lamnso' in its present written form. These language development activities were largely implemented by missionary societies and churches with some purpose in mind. Within a reconstruction of the historical framework, the chapter is primarily concerned to identify the intents and purposes that these organizations espoused in the use of Cameroonian languages.

From the arrival of the first Baptist missionaries in 1844 up until World War I, all the missions operating in Cameroon were involved in some kind of production of written translations into local languages and accompanying literacy instruction. In his history of the Baptist Mission in West Cameroon, Charles Weber's description of the motivations of Baptist missions in developing Cameroonian languages serves to characterize all the missions in Cameroon prior to World War I:

Essentially the Baptist missionary endeavors centered around the following efforts: learning the indigenous languages, evangelizing the local populations, translating Scripture, hymns, etc. into the vernacular, teaching literature in the vernacular to Africans, and establishing churches. Much of the activity stemmed from the importance placed by Protestants on a literate population which could read and study Scripture for themselves. Thus mission schools provided the essential function of training African congregations with indigenous leadership. This resulted in local congregations with a written language, literate constituents, and a body of vernacular literature. (Weber 1993:2)

Protestants were not the only ones who sought to create a population literate in local languages. This chapter will show that the above characterization also applies to the Catholic Missions, with the difference that the early Catholic missionaries did not emphasize widespread individual Scripture reading.

Notwithstanding the missionaries' motivations to use local languages, in the fifty years following World War I, virtually no translations were begun in additional local languages. When missionary activity resumed after the war, translation activity was also resumed in those languages that were already in use in churches and

schools. However, none of the other eighty-plus languages spoken in present-day Anglophone Cameroon<sup>1</sup> was developed for textual use in churches or schools until the development of Lamnso' was initiated in 1972. This chapter explores the reasons for this paradox, and explains why, in spite of their apparent appreciation for Bible translation and literacy in indigenous languages, the missions did so little to develop the written use of the many languages spoken in this region. It argues that the contrast between the pre- and post-War situations was the result of post-War British colonial education policy that exerted a significant influence on missionary ideologies concerning literacy and language choice for texts.

The historical evidence upon which these contrasts and changes are posited is taken from the Baptist, Catholic and Basel missions in Cameroon, each of which is examined in terms of their language policies and practices as media for mission activities. The chapter examines how the international missionary community had every intention of respecting local African language and culture in the educational process, but actually implemented a policy under the British Colonial Educational Code that instated English literacy instruction as the prerogative of the school, to the detriment of the written use of vernacular languages. The consequences of this policy persist, influencing the language choices and scripture use of the Cameroonian churches to this day. Most initial literacy instruction among the Nso' still happens in schools where English is the medium of instruction, with the result that literacy instruction is closely associated with English language acquisition.

### **Language Development Prior to the 1926 Educational Code**

The Baptist, Basel and Catholic missions were the three missionary societies which were active in the area of present-day Anglophone Cameroon prior to World War I. This section examines the precedents that they set and the circumstances surrounding each mission's choices for language development. The few indigenous languages (principally Duala, Mungaka, and Pidgin) that were developed for written use during this period were the only ones to be used for Bible translation in the Anglophone zone until the Lamnso' Bible translation project was begun.

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<sup>1</sup> *Anglophone Cameroon* is not a recognized political entity. The term is intended as a political/linguistic designation that includes the territory of the present-day Northwest and Southwest Provinces.



The first missionaries to Cameroon were Jamaican Baptists organized by the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1841, the British missionary Alfred Saker led a party of Jamaicans and freed slaves to set up a base of operations on the island of Fernando Po, adjacent to the British naval base at Clarence. In 1844 the families of the Jamaican Joseph Merrick and former slave Alexander Fuller founded a mission on the mainland at Bimbia, while Alfred Saker and Sierra Leonian Thomas Horton Johnson established a mission at Douala.<sup>3</sup> In 1858, after the British had abandoned their naval base at Fernando Po and the Spanish had reasserted their claim to the island, Saker brought a group of freed slaves to the mainland and established the community of Victoria (now known as Limbe) on land bought from King William of Bimbia.

Saker set up the mission station on the pattern of church and school. He learned the local Duala language and translated the Bible and various other books into that language. He also set up schools at the mission stations to teach literacy and the use of these texts. The language of the texts and the language of instruction was Duala. Thus the mission station was a place where people acquired the knowledge that they would need to become Christians (school), and members of the Christian community (church). A key part of the knowledge imparted by the school was book-learning, i.e., knowledge of the proper way to use textual resources in the life of the Christian. Reading scripture was integral to the Christian practices of the missionary, and knowledge of these practices were passed on to believers and potential believers through the school. The school curriculum was essentially a form of catechesis, preparing people to become Christians.

Saker and Merrick exemplified these ideals of language learning and text production in local African languages. Merrick arrived on the Cameroon coast in 1845, and by 1849 he had translated Genesis, Exodus, Matthew and John and created a dictionary in Isubu. Saker worked on Duala, a language related to Isubu, and building on Merrick's work<sup>4</sup> eventually completed "the translation of Scripture, and the production of grammars, a dictionary, schoolbooks, hymnals in the vernaculars of Duala and Isubu" (Weber 1993:3). Saker also established schooling programs on the

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<sup>2</sup> This section is based on the works of Hugh Vernon-Jackson (1967), Brian Stanley (1992) and Charles Weber (1992).

<sup>3</sup> The French spelling *Douala* is used for the place-name, since it corresponds with the contemporary spelling used for the city. The alternative spelling of *Duala* refers the language and ethnic group.

<sup>4</sup> Merrick died on ship returning to England in 1849 (Stanley 1992:109).



mission compounds that gave instructional support for people to learn how to use these texts properly. The English language was also taught at advanced levels in the curriculum, but it shared a place with the vernacular.

From 1845 to 1885 the Baptist Mission in Cameroon operated without any European governmental interference on its school curriculum or language policies. This changed in 1885 when Germany annexed the territory surrounding the Baptist missions and formed the colony of *Kamerun*. When it became clear to the Baptists that they could no longer maintain a British enclave in Cameroon, they gave up their mission properties in Cameroon to the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (henceforth Basel Mission), and removed their expatriate personnel to their mission in the Congo. Arrangements were made with the Basel Mission to allow the existing Baptist churches to continue with their theological distinctives, such as adult baptism by immersion, without anticipating the church governance conflicts that would ensue. The Baptist churches were used to an autonomous congregational style of governance and rebelled at any outside interference in their affairs. The churches at Douala and Victoria split with the Basel Mission within four years. (In the case of the Victoria Baptist Church, the Basel Mission's Duala-language policy was also at issue. See Basel Mission section below.)

#### ***German Baptist Mission and its language policies***

The troubles of the native Baptist churches came to the attention of Baptists in Germany through Alfred Bell, a Cameroonian student who happened to be visiting Berlin in 1889. Bell told Eduard Scheve, a German Baptist pastor, of the Cameroonian Baptists' plight and convinced him to take up the cause of the disassociated Cameroonian Baptist churches. After correspondence with the Cameroonian Baptist churches, they were accepted under the aegis of the German Baptist Union, a confederation of autonomous Baptist churches. Scheve sought among German churches in America for a missionary to send to Cameroon, and the person he found was August Steffens, a young German immigrant who had recently finished seminary in the United States (Woyke 1979:198). This presaged an ongoing cooperative arrangement and further recruitment among German-American Baptist churches for obtaining personnel for the Baptist Mission in Cameroon, and eventually for its transition to an American-based Baptist mission.

Like the English Baptists before them, the German Baptists made it a priority to learn and use the local language. Carl Bender, who became a leader of the Baptist Mission in Cameroon, exemplified this priority. Bender arrived in Cameroon in 1899. He was a German immigrant to the United States and educated in the German

Department of the American Baptist Seminary in Rochester, New York. In his first term until 1903 he preached and taught Sunday School in the Duala field. He learned the Duala language and Bakweri, a related language. When he returned from furlough in 1904, among other duties he taught in a vernacular school. "His teaching consisted of courses in reading and writing in both German and Duala, history, geography, and Bible. In addition he became the field superintendent for the whole Baptist work in Cameroon from 1904 until his next furlough in 1908" (Weber 1993:30).

Bender continued in the tradition of Saker's language policies concerning church and school. The church and school were the domains of missionary activities and the local language had a prominent place. Since reading the Bible was a central activity for a Baptist Christian, translating the Bible and preparing Christians in literacy was also central to the mission task. These activities were of a piece, and the language of the compound was the language in which these activities would be carried out. Where Saker had established the use of Bible translation and Duala literacy, Bender built on these textual foundations, translating Bible study aids into Duala so that church workers could better understand the Duala Bible translation (Weber 1993:38).

The Baptist Mission grew steadily and by 1913 had 57 primary schools and 3,151 pupils in the German colony of *Kamerun*. However, this was disrupted by World War I and would not be effectively resumed until 1927. Only Bender among all Baptists was permitted to stay because he raised an American flag over the mission and resisted internship by the Allies because of his American citizenship. He remained in Cameroon until 1919, when he returned to the United States (Henry 1999:131).

#### ***Basel Mission Language Policies Before and During World War I***

On 14 July 1884, Gustav Nachtigal as envoy for Germany signed a treaty with the Duala Chiefs Bell and Akwa annexing their territory as a protectorate of Germany (Ardener 1996:270). Five days later the British government's representative arrived to find the Duala settlements under the German flag. He signed a treaty claiming British sovereignty over the Baptist settlement at Victoria, but he failed to secure any treaties with indigenous leaders (Dah 1983:56). The annexation of Cameroon by Germany stimulated a discussion among the German Protestant missions as to their role in the German colonial territories. In the following year at the Bremen Conference of all the German Protestant missions, they agreed that German missions should take the lead in German colonies. This was also in keeping with the interests of the German government, which requested the Basel Mission to

assume the mission work in Cameroon (Gelzer 1970:4). The only obstacle to a complete transfer of sovereignty to Germany was the Baptist settlement at Victoria. Britain indicated that it would not object to the “loss” of Victoria if the Basel Mission was able to come to an agreement with the Baptist Mission (Ardener 1996:271). Meanwhile, the London office of the Baptist Mission was keen to move its Cameroon personnel to its Congo work. Hence after two years of negotiations, the Baptist Mission sold its properties and transferred the supervision of its churches to the Basel Mission. Shortly thereafter in 1887, Britain ceded Victoria to Germany (Ardener 1996:273).

When it arrived in Cameroon in 1886, the Basel Mission chose to use the Duala language as the official language for its schools and churches, a policy which the German colonial government was at first in agreement<sup>5</sup> (Stumpf 1979:32). Duala was one of the languages that its predecessor, the Baptist Mission, had previously developed for school and church use; Alfred Saker had produced an alphabet, grammar, dictionary, and Bible translation. The Basel Mission enlarged on these by producing a revision of the Duala New Testament translation in 1901 and further developing its own grammar, dictionary, school texts, songbooks, and liturgies in Duala (Jenkins and Haas 1988:135-38).<sup>6</sup> The government also opened a Duala-medium school in 1887. Theodor Christaller, son of Basel missionaries in Ghana, was hired as the first teacher and he developed texts and readers in the Duala language (Halldén 1968:60).

The Basel Mission took over Duala speaking churches and schools of the Baptist Mission, but it also began to establish its own missions. It founded new mission stations near the coast and extended the use of the Duala language to the churches and schools where Duala was not locally spoken. The justification for this language policy was that Duala was the largest of the coastal tribes and the Duala language was already functioning as an oral *lingua franca* on the coast. Erik Halldén in his study, *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons 1886-1905*, comments on the rationalization implicit in this arrangement:

Naturally the Basel Mission found itself at odds with tribes not belonging to Duala and unwilling to speak its language, but on the other hand it was nevertheless understood that an African language

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<sup>5</sup> The German government encouraged the use of local Cameroonian languages, but not Pidgin, which was associated with English. Pidgin was in such widespread use among German colonial officials that in 1913 Germany banned its official use (Wolf 2001:62).

<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in Ghana the Basel Mission produced Bible translations, dictionaries, grammars, catechisms and songbooks in the Ga and Twi languages (Smith 1966:54-56).

was closer to another African language than to the alien European tongue. (1968:90)

The relationship with the Victoria Baptist Church was the first casualty of the Basel Mission's Duala language policy. Unlike the Baptist churches founded near the present-day city of Douala, the Baptist church at Victoria was not Duala speaking.<sup>7</sup> Victoria was a Christian settlement comprised mostly of artisans and freed slaves from various parts of West Africa who had joined Alfred Saker when he was forced to leave his base of operations on Fernando Po. Since the residents of Victoria were from elsewhere in West Africa<sup>8</sup> and not ethnically homogeneous, they spoke a version of West African Pidgin among themselves (Ardener 1996:268), which subsequently developed into a creole.<sup>9</sup> When the Basel Mission attempted to impose its Duala language policy on the church and school at Victoria, the Victorians objected, preferring to continue with Pidgin and English. Their request to use English went to the Basel Mission Committee (Home Board) and was denied, and in 1899 the Victoria Baptist church seceded from the Basel Mission (Dah 1986:25; Halldén 1968:70).

There is no doubt that the Basel Mission valued the study and development of African languages in its work in Cameroon. What distinguishes the Basel Mission language policy from previous policies in Cameroon was the extent that it elevated one African language (Duala) that the missionaries would learn, translate, and teach in school to the exclusion of other African languages. The Basel Mission pursued a similar policy in the interior, Grassfields region of Cameroon by establishing one local language, the language of the Bali, as the medium for church and school. However, the history of the relations of the Bali with their neighbors was even more hostile than that surrounding the Duala because of the Bali's alliance with the German colonial régime.

In 1889, Eugen Zintgraff led the first German expedition to the Grassfields. In addition to establishing a trade route to the interior of Cameroon, he was looking for laborers to work the coastal plantations. After an unreceptive response from most of the Grassfields chieftaincies, Zintgraff found a willing ally in the Bali, one of the smaller groups<sup>10</sup> in the region. Zintgraff elevated the Bali Fon to paramount chief

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<sup>7</sup> Victoria was located near the Bubia, a non-Duala speaking indigenous group (Grimes 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Fernando Po, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast according to Knutson (2002).

<sup>9</sup> A pidgin that becomes the mother-tongue for a population is called a *creole*. Berry (1971:512-13) notes that Creole English is spoken by a small group on the coast of Cameroon who are descendents of the early Christian followers of Alfred Saker.

<sup>10</sup> Nkwi (1989:11) estimates the Bali population at 12,000 in 1906 with 58,000 in vassal tribes. At the time the Nso' population was estimated at 50,000.

over the other chieftaincies and gave him power to conscript labor from other “subject groups” (Chilver 1967:492). Subsequently, when the groups neighboring the Bali rebelled, Zintgraff armed the Bali and established them as the local force (known as the *Bali-Truppe*) to police the trade route. The Bali-Truppe continued to attack “hostile” neighboring tribes and were rewarded by the Germans with a fathom of cloth for the head of every male they killed (Chilver 1967:488). In a subsequent reprisal engagement with the Bafut and Mankon, 1,062 Bafut and 218 Mankon were killed, and 366 Bafut and 217 Mankon were taken prisoner. Following their victory, the Germans demanded an indemnity of 300 Bafut and 200 Mankon workers to serve as forced labor (Chilver 1967:495).

It was following this political situation of hostility between the Bali and their neighbors that the Basel Mission established a mission among the Bali in 1903, its first in the Grassfields. A vernacular school (*Volksschule*) for boys was opened with instruction in Mungaka, the language of the Bali. The Fon himself learned to read and write, and supported the vernacular school to the point of conscripting boys from neighboring ethnic groups into school attendance.

At times the Fon supervised the round-up of school-aged children, and even pursued runaways. Most of the children were not native to Bali-Nyonga, but from subject villages. (O’Neil 1996:95)

In 1907 a two-year German course (*Knabenschule*) was opened for 130 of the brightest boys who completed the vernacular school. The medium of instruction for the *Knabenschule* was still Mungaka, but there was also some instruction in German as a subject. This became the training center for catechists and teachers in the Grassfields. When they completed their training, ten of the *Knabenschule* graduates became the teachers for ten vernacular schools in Mungaka started outside of Bali (Keller 1969:28).

The Basel missionaries also developed written materials in Mungaka in support of their Bali training strategy. Ferdinand Ernst and Jakob Keller first developed a primer, catechism and dictionary in Mungaka (Jenkins and Haas 1988:140-41). Subsequently, Adolf Vielhauer and Elisa Ndifon produced a collection of Bible stories in Mungaka in 1915, and following World War I, they translated the New Testament [1933], a hymnal [1939], a 336-page history of the Christian Church [1944], and a translation of the complete Bible [1961<sup>11</sup>] (Dah 1986; Keller 1969:99).

It was not just the neighbors to the Duala and Bali that objected to the imposition of those two languages. In time the German colonial government became

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<sup>11</sup> Finished posthumously by Ndifon and Tischhauser after Vielhauer's death in 1959 (Keller 1969:99).



concerned about the disproportionate influence that the quasi-officialization of Duala and Mungaka accorded these two ethnic groups. In 1910 the government instituted a new school policy that prohibited the use of any language “as a medium of instruction and as a subject except German and the actual dialect that is spoken by the people” (Keller 1969:38). In effect it forbade the use of Duala and Mungaka in schools outside of those villages where these languages were spoken. The Basel Mission objected to this policy because they believed in the importance of the “native language” as a medium for schooling, but since they were not in position to develop all the local languages, they felt it important to be able to continue with Duala and Mungaka as media of instruction. They protested to the Colonial Governor, and not succeeding there, took the case to the German Colonial Office in Berlin through their Basel mission offices. No agreement was reached (Stumpf 1979:76-78), but it was no longer an issue when the war broke out in 1914 and the European personnel of the Basel Mission had to leave Cameroon.

Reinhold Rohde, an Australian citizen, was the only ordained Basel missionary who was able to remain during the British wartime occupation of Cameroon. When it became clear that Rohde would also be expelled, on 9 April 1917 he ordained Johannes Litumbe Ekese, a catechist from near Mt. Cameroon (not a Duala-speaking<sup>12</sup> area). In Duala there had been African ministers ordained by the Basel Mission, but with the division between the British and French Cameroon, there were no Basel-ordained ministers on the British side.<sup>13</sup> Rohde left Cameroon in October 1917, and Ekese became responsible for the oversight of all the Basel Mission churches in the British Cameroon until 1925 (Keller 1969:50-53).

Ekese was educated in a vernacular school in his home village, followed by a Knabenschule in Buea, the capital of German Cameroon (Keller 1969:53). In both of these schools the instruction would have been in Duala. Ekese traveled widely to visit the various mission stations on the coast and in the Grassfields in order to administer communion and baptize catechumens. In the Grassfields the missions were newer and he met with mixed success. In Meta' near Bamenda in the Grassfields he was warmly welcomed by the catechist John Asili. However in Bali, the same Fon Fonyonga, who formerly was such good friends with the missionary Ferdinand Ernst, had subsequently locked the church and forbidden the Bali

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<sup>12</sup> Ekese was from the village of Membea (Keller 1969:53), which according to Ardener (1996:44) was among the Bakwari villages.

<sup>13</sup> Basel Mission stations in the French Cameroons were taken over by the Paris Mission (Keller 1969:50).



Christians to meet. In 1919 Ekese made a second tour to visit the Grassfield churches but encountered such resistance that eventually he had to confine his work to the coast. Ekese could not command as much prestige as the missionaries, nor could he communicate in any of the Grassfields languages. In the Grassfields he would have used Pidgin to communicate, while on the coast he would have had recourse to his native Bakwari, as well as Duala and Pidgin. When Ekese could no longer visit congregations in the interior of the British Cameroons, Elie Allégret of the Paris Mission<sup>14</sup> obtained permission from the British Resident in Buea for ordained ministers<sup>15</sup> to travel from Duala (in the French colony of *Cameroun*) to cross the border to visit Basel Mission congregations, and some were even allowed to be stationed in British territory (Keller 1969:57).

### ***Catholic Mission Language Choices Before and During the War***

The earliest Catholic missionaries, the Pallotines,<sup>16</sup> began their work in the coastal region of the German *Kamerun* colony in 1890. During the German colonial regime, they used Pidgin orally and also learned a few local indigenous languages well enough to prepare written materials. The Pallotines “published the gospels and a catechism in the Douala and Bakoko languages. They also compiled a prayerbook, and a Bible History in the Bassa language and prepared grammars and dictionaries to be used in the school” (Stukart ca.1965:4). Subsequently, another Catholic missionary congregation, the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,<sup>17</sup> requested permission to work among Muslims in northern Cameroon. The German administration denied their request but did give them permission to work in the Grassfields (Rudin 1938:373). In 1912 the Sacred Heart Fathers began a mission at Shisong, near Kumbo, the seat of the Fon of Nso'. Shisong became their base of operations for evangelizing the neighboring ethnic groups in the Grassfields, and eventually they hoped establish work among the Muslims in the province of Adamawa (Lafon 1988:33). The school that they established at Shisong was part of their strategy for evangelizing neighboring groups, as illustrated in the variety of ethnic groups attending the school:

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<sup>14</sup> Société des Missions Evangeliques de Paris.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob Modi Din, one of the first Duala ministers to be ordained, was the most prominent (Keller 1969:40).

<sup>16</sup> Formally, the *Society of the Catholic Apostolate* founded by St. Vincent Pallotti in 1835.

<sup>17</sup> Originally founded in 1878 at St. Quentin, France by Léon Dehon, the missionaries to Cameroon were from the order's house in Sittard, Holland; they were sometimes referred to as *Dehonians* or *Sittard Fathers* (Emonts 1927 cited in Fowler 1998).

The Fathers returned to Shisong with groups of schoolchildren, who came from Djottin, Oku, Babagi, Wum, Bum, Nsungli, Babessi, Baba, and Bamungo. They were, together with the children of Nso', the first ones to receive primary education in the school at Shisong. After they had completed their school, it was hoped, they would return to their villages and help in the evangelisation of their people as catechists or as teachers of new schools. (Stukart ca.1965:12)

In this case, Stukart specifically refers to the languages and subjects of instruction:

Every morning, at 6 o'clock, the Angelus was said, followed by Holy Mass. Classes, which began at 8 o'clock, were given in the Lamnso and German languages. Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, singing and religious instruction were the main subjects taught. The afternoons were set aside for agriculture, gardening and manual arts. . . . Day in day out, the missionaries studied the language and customs of the people. They left us the beginnings of a Lamnso-German grammar and dictionary, a Lamnso catechism, hymnbook and Bible History. (Stukart ca.1965:12)

Stukart does not specifically address whether the Sacred Heart missionaries used Pidgin in addition to Lamnso', but it is difficult to believe that they would not have learned it and used it orally as necessary, since the Catholic missionaries used Pidgin on the coast where it was in widespread use and there were so many languages spoken on the plantations. However, by this time the German government was discouraging the use of Pidgin, which would have impeded its further written use in the Grassfields.

#### ***The War Years: Leadership of the Catechists and Visits by European Clergy***

In 1914, the German colony of *Kamerun*, situated between British Nigeria and French Equatorial Africa, was quickly drawn into World War I. After a two-year period of joint rule by the Allied forces, during which the Germans forces were defeated, Britain and France agreed among themselves to divide the colony into separately administrated British and French territories. The British portion included about one-sixth the area and one-third the population<sup>18</sup> of the former German colony. The expanse that would eventually become the British Mandate "consisted of two narrow strips of territory separated from one another for forty miles at the Benue River valley. The territory extended seven hundred miles from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad. Nowhere was it more than eighty miles wide" (Gardinier 1967:514). See Figure 2.

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<sup>18</sup> An estimated 644,414 for the entire British territory in 1922 (Gardinier 1967:514).

The southernmost region came to be known as the Cameroons Province (or, alternatively, the Southern Cameroons).<sup>19</sup> The province was in turn divided into four political units called *divisions*. Listed from south to north these were Victoria and Kumba (principally plantations), Mamfe (principally forest), and Bamenda (principally highland, often referred to as *Grassfields*). The senior political officer was the Resident of the Cameroons Province, who reported to the Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Nigeria Provinces. The Resident had his headquarters in the former German capital of Buea in the Victoria Division (Gardinier 1967:526).



**Fig. 2. Sub-division of British Cameroon (Eyongetah and Brain 1974)**

<sup>19</sup> The territory to the north of the Cameroons Province was divided into the provinces of Bornu and Yola. These were each governed by a Resident under the charge of the Lieutenant Governor of Northern Nigeria (Gardinier 1967:526).

By 1916 the former German colony had been cleared of German personnel, including all the Catholic missionaries serving in the colony. The German priests and brothers either fled or were interned on the island of Fernando Po, along with other military prisoners of war.<sup>20</sup> There had been two Catholic missionary societies operating in the British occupied Cameroons. The Pallotine Fathers had been working principally in the coastal south since 1890, and the Sacred Heart Fathers had only recently established missions in the northern Grassfields in 1912.

Although no Catholic clergy were left resident in the British occupied Cameroons, visits by priests from the French side occurred during this time. Two French Holy Ghost Fathers serving as chaplains to the French forces, Fathers Douvry and Retter, traveled occasionally from Douala to visit the coastal plantation areas in the Victoria Division and baptized a number of catechumens. (Stukart ca.1965:18).<sup>21</sup> In the Bamenda Division to the north, some French Fathers occasionally visited the Grassfields from Dschang, a mission station just east of the British occupied zone. On one such visit, five baptisms were recorded at the former mission<sup>22</sup> among the Nso'.

The only priest to visit the Southern Cameroons from the Nigeria side during the war years was Joseph Shanahan, an Irish Holy Ghost Father. Shanahan, who later became the first bishop of southern Nigeria, traveled in 1916 by launch from Calabar, Nigeria to Victoria (now known as Limbe). During his three-week visit to the former missions among the coastal plantations in Victoria Division he baptized some catechumens at the former mission stations of Bota and Bonjongo. Then in 1918 Shanahan received a commission from Rome to visit the abandoned mission stations of Adamawa, the Prefecture to the north that included the Grassfields region. This time he traveled overland from Onitsha, Nigeria, throughout the inland forest and Grassfields, completing what became known as his "thousand mile trek" (Jordan 1949). Shanahan reported,

The faith of the Cameroons' Christians is beyond praise. Few in numbers, scattered over a wide area, bereft of priests and of all support, despised by their chiefs, their churches and schools closed or in ruins, they have remained faithful to God in the midst of all these accumulated disasters. (Jordan 1949:177)

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<sup>20</sup> Lafon (1988:47) cites Emontz (1927:215) that all the Catholic Fathers and Brothers were called to join the German colonial army at Bamenda.

<sup>21</sup> Father Retter continued these visits after the war until the Mill Hill Fathers arrived in February 1922.

<sup>22</sup> A *mission* in this context is a place where a missionary priest is assigned residence. To establish or to abandon a mission is primarily a statement about the deployment of missionary personnel.

The absence of resident priests in the Southern Cameroons and the reports of baptisms whenever the priests made visits to the area, point out the key role of lay catechists during this period. The best-documented description of these catechists was of Sango Mathias Effiem. In 1903 Effiem was in the first class to graduate from a five-year primary school started by the Pallotine Fathers at Bonjongo, Victoria Division. He worked for three years as a houseboy and primary school teacher in a mission school in Ikassa, not far from his home area of Rio del Rey. He then went on to the catechist school at Sasse, and was promoted to the seminary there. He may well have become a priest if the war had not intervened.

When the war broke out and the German Pallotine Fathers had to leave, on November 13, 1914, Fr. Lettenbauer handed Effiem the keys of the Sasse Church. Thus at the age of twenty-three, he became the leader of the Catholic Christian community in a large part of S. Cameroons.

He had been advised to marry, to take care of the vestments in the church and to organize the catechists. During the next eight years, when there was no resident priest in the country, Effiem traveled widely supervising other catechists on the plantations as far afield as Bakossi. He taught doctrine, led prayer meetings and prepared catechumens for baptism and christians [sic] for confirmation. Occasionally, French Fathers came to say mass [sic] but in particular, Frs. Douvry and Retter together with Mgr. Shanahan baptized hundreds of catechumens prepared by Effiem. (Ndi 1983:38)

Other catechists who exercised lay leadership in the three southernmost divisions during the war years included Gabriel Lifaka and Simon Nguti in the Victoria division, and Pius Ebung Epie in the Kumba and Mamfe divisions (Stukart ca.1965:17; O'Neil 1991:6).

In the northern Grassfields region, Christianity had been introduced much more recently, so there was less lay leadership in place when the war began. After the German Fathers left, the Christians in the Grassfields experienced a period of persecution. The Grassfields chiefs had accepted missionaries as a part of German colonial occupation, but they assumed that with the defeat of the Germans and the evacuation of the missionaries, Christianity was gone for good. Consequently, in the eyes of the native leadership, to persist in adhering to the German religion was tacitly to ally oneself to the former discredited German regime. Without European patrons to protect them, Christians in the Grassfields were vulnerable to native chiefs who were ready to reassert their authority.

The chiefs and nobles closed down numerous churches and forbade their wives and daughters from attending the religious classes and schools. With the white missionaries gone, it was easier for them to curb the activities of the catechists and converts whom they knew well, understood better and feared less. They used every means at



their disposal, official and traditional intrigue, and even brute force to eliminate this “evil” force. (Ndi 1983:43)

When the German missionaries were interned in 1915 on Fernando Po, along with many Cameroonian servants and carriers, they continued to employ the same language strategies as they did before the war: use of certain vernaculars, Pidgin, and German. Confined on the island with Cameroonians from the coast and Grassfields regions, the Pallotine and Sacred Heart Fathers continued to work with the members from the language groups that they knew best, using Pidgin orally and German written materials when they lacked translated materials in a Cameroonian language. This use of written German is illustrated by an anecdote regarding the commissioning of one Cameroonian, Michael Tim, at the end of his period of internment (as recounted by his brother):

The day they were discharged and prepared to be transported back to the mainland from Fernando Po all internees were lined up according to their tribe of origin. A German priest looked down line after line and face after face until he arrived in front of Michael. He handed him a *German prayer book* and told him that “if you go to your country and forget Christianity, God will ask you what you did about the prayerbook the Father gave you”. That’s why when he returned to Kom [in the Grassfields] he was ready to die because of Christianity and he nearly did as a catechist. (emphasis added, O’Neil 1991:26)

The internment of German personnel resulted in the virtual overnight disappearance of the German language from the Cameroonian mainland. The use of German on Fernando Po only continued until the end of the war. Vestiges of German might be found in religious vocabulary or written materials, but there was no support for its ongoing use in the Catholic Church in the Cameroons (Wolf 2001:63).

### ***Christian Instruction of the Nso' Exiles***

In 1916 seven Nso' catechumens,<sup>23</sup> led by Paul Tangwa, left Nso' for the coastal city of Douala in the French Cameroons to seek further Christian instruction (and possibly to escape persecution by the Fon of Nso'). With the help of Peter Wame, a catechist in charge of the former German Catholic mission at Shisong, they were introduced to two French chaplains of the Allied Forces, Father Douvry and Father Retter. The seven remained there for two years to receive instruction and were baptized in 1918. At the end of Father Shanahan’s tour of the Southern Cameroons, he returned by way of Douala and encountered Paul Tangwa’s recently baptized

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Tangwa, John Maimo, Francis Seem, Joseph Tar, Simon Bongjo, Andreas Nga, and Maria Bongayimo (Lafon 1988).



group. Shanahan's report<sup>24</sup> of his recent visit to Nso' (their home area) encouraged them to return to the Grassfields as lay evangelists, which they did in 1919 (Ndi 1983; Lafon 1988).

Another significant group of Cameroonian Christian leaders was formed in the internment camp on Fernando Po. When the German citizens resident in the colony were interned, also interned with them were those Cameroonians who had served under them. Some of these were actually soldiers, but many were simply servants, cargo carriers, and messengers. During this period of internment, the German Fathers undertook the spiritual care of all, and many Cameroonians received Christian instruction and were baptized. Since missionaries and Cameroonians from various areas in the German colony were confined together, the missionaries continued to relate to those Cameroonians who came from those same areas where they had been assigned. So the Sacred Heart Fathers continued to associate with the Cameroonians from the Grassfields, while the Pallotine Fathers looked after those from their coastal missions. Lafon (1988:54) records that 900 were baptized and 1500 were under instruction (as catechumens) during this time.

#### ***Catholic Mission Language Choices Before and During the War***

Returning to those British and French missionaries who visited the Southern Cameroons during the war years, they would have used Pidgin to communicate with the Cameroonians they encountered from various ethnic groups. Pidgin was a *lingua franca* spoken along much of the coast of West Africa, and it would have been the only language that Fathers Douvry, Retter, and Shanahan would have had in common with the Cameroonians whom they visited in the Southern Cameroons. It is also the most likely language used for the religious instruction of the seven Nso' catechumens led by Paul Tangwa who had left the Grassfields for Douala. Even though the city of Douala was under French occupation at the time, it is likely that the Fathers used Pidgin rather than attempting to teach the Lamnso' speakers French. Even Cameroonian catechists such as Sango Effiem (a Subu speaker) would have employed Pidgin in working with speakers of the many various languages encountered in the Southern Cameroons.

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<sup>24</sup> "Generally speaking, the [Grassfield] chiefs have shown themselves hostile, with the exception of those in Kumbo [Nso'] and Bekom [Kom], who are quite friendly to us" (Jordan 1949:178). This report is ironic considering the persecution that Christians had received from the Fon of Nso' and would again receive when they returned to Kumbo.

### ***Return of the Internees and Missionaries after the War***

During the war, the shortage of personnel in the British colonial administration gave them very tenuous control of the territory captured in the Cameroons, especially in the Grassfields. The colonial administration depended on the good will of the native chiefs to keep order, and had few resources to enforce their control should conflict arise. They were aware of the tensions between the chiefs and some Christians, and they wanted to contain this conflict if at all possible. Thus the District Officer at Bamenda wrote the Resident towards the end of the war advising against any renewal of missionary activity in that region:

The consensus of opinion of the chiefs is not altogether in favour of the re-establishment of missions. Chiefs I have interviewed affirm and assure me emphatically that the German missionaries undermined their authority and created many difficulties. These chiefs also inform me that since the German missions were closed these difficulties have to a great extent disappeared and they are able to exercise a very much more efficient control over their "boys". . . . [I]t is not advisable for any missionaries to commence their activities here at present. (quoted in Ndi 1983:47-48)

The District Officer foresaw that the return of missionaries would exacerbate the conflict between the Christians and the native chiefs, but he did not anticipate that the first "missionaries" to return would be Cameroonians, not Europeans. However, the resumption of missionary activities is precisely what happened at the end of World War I. In 1919, the internees on Fernando Po were released and returned to their homelands. The return of so many Christians who had been interned with the Germans during the war years provided the leadership for a revival of Christianity, especially in the Grassfields. Regarding themselves as lay missionaries to their homelands, these released internees were zealous for Christianity and "uncompromisingly contemptuous of traditional *mores*" (Chilver 1963:119). During this year Paul Tangwa's group also returned to the Grassfields from Douala. Tangwa assumed the leadership of the Catholic Church among the Nso', and became the chief catechist.

The following year, when Tangwa learned that the French Fathers had returned to the area of the French Cameroons adjacent to the Grassfields, he invited them to the Bamenda Division. Since no German mission personnel were yet allowed to return to the British or French Cameroons, the Sacred Heart Society had assigned French-speaking members (of French or Belgian nationality) to this region. In 1920,

Mgr. Plissoneau arrived from the Belgian Congo to assume the responsibility for the Prefecture of Adamawa.<sup>25</sup>

Plissoneau initially went to the town of Foumban, on the French Cameroons side of the border, but at the invitation of Tangwa, he entered the Bamenda Division to visit the closed missions of his province. On Christmas Day at the former mission of Shisong, Plissoneau “found two hundred christians [sic] and another five hundred in the neighbouring villages and over 1600 catechumens” (Ndi 1983:53). Encouraged by what he found, Plissoneau re-opened the mission at Shisong and assigned Father William Bintner as the mission superior. Bintner had served in the same Sacred Heart mission before the war with the German Fathers, but since he was from Luxembourg and not Germany, he was able to return (Gufler 1988:14). Together Plissoneau and Bintner traveled the length of the Prefecture as far as Ossing (Mamfe), visiting former missions and baptizing candidates that the catechists had prepared. On their tour of Bamenda, the Fathers found groups of Christians from two different origins: groups where the German Catholic missionaries had established churches prior to World War I, and groups where ex-servicemen had returned to their homes and created new converts to Christianity. In response to the requests of these groups, they decided to re-open all three missions<sup>26</sup> in the Southern Cameroons that had been abandoned during the war.

The conflicts that were already active between the local chiefs and Christians received new energy from the arrival of the French Fathers. As Europeans, the French Fathers gave legitimacy and advocacy to the cause of the Christians. However, they also provoked strong reactions from those who opposed the Christians. The day after the Fathers left Shisong to continue their tour of Bamenda, the church there was immediately burned down. Such disturbances inevitably drew the British colonial administration into the conflict, and although various colonial officers were more sympathetic with the one side or the other, fundamentally they simply wanted to keep the peace.

Initially the Resident, V. Fitzherbert Ruxton, hoped that the French Fathers would have a conciliatory effect on the new Christians who refused to recognize the native authority and customs. However the pattern that emerged was one of conflicts “polarized between the minority of new men looking to the Catholic missionaries

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<sup>25</sup> The Prefecture of Adamawa extended across the border between the British and French Cameroons; thus, the Bamenda Division of the Southern Cameroons Province was a part of the jurisdiction assigned to the Sacred Heart Fathers. The Congregation de Propaganda Fide assigned the Catholic mission society jurisdictions (Goddard 1967:116-17).

<sup>26</sup> Shisong [Kumbo], Ossing [Mamfe], and Bekom [Njinikom] (O’Neil 1991:24).

and traditional authority looking to the Divisional Officer for support” (Chilver 1963:119). It was this pattern of conflict between the missionaries and the native authorities that led the colonial administration in 1921 to request Rome to assign a British missionary agency to the British sphere of the Cameroons. The hope was that despite the inherent conflicts between the Catholic Christians and the native authorities, British missionaries would be more biddable and sympathetic to British colonial administration concerns.

During their short tenure from 1920-23, the French Sacred Heart Fathers baptized 1,043 people and counted 1,490 Christians and over 3,000 catechumens. At the mission in Shisong where Lamnso' was spoken, they continued the language policy of their German<sup>27</sup> predecessors by learning Lamnso' themselves and employing it in religious instruction and church services. Elsewhere in the Grassfields where Lamnso' was not spoken, they used Pidgin as a *lingua franca*. Although Pidgin was principally used on the coastal plantations, men from the Grassfields who had traveled to the coast (as well as those interned on Fernando Po) would have had some exposure to it.

Plissoneau was the first to extend Pidgin beyond its typical oral use by creating a written Pidgin catechism.<sup>28</sup> The Pidgin catechism was intended as an intermediary step pending the development of vernacular written materials. It was probably used as an aid to the *catechist*, and not directly by the *catechumens*. O'Neil describes such use later by the Mill Hill Fathers:

The catechist was not, however, supposed to teach in Pidgin. Rather Pidgin was to help the catechist to understand and to translate texts into his own language. (O'Neil 1991:69)

This interpretation suggests that among groups where vernacular written materials were not yet developed, the French Fathers selected their catechists from among young men who had been to the coast and had learned some Pidgin.

### **Arrival of the Mill Hill Missionaries**

The Mill Hill missionaries arrived in the Southern Cameroons on 26 March 1922 in response to the British colonial administration's request to Rome that British Catholic missionary personnel be assigned to the Southern Cameroons.<sup>29</sup> They were

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<sup>27</sup> The German Fathers also taught the German language in primary school, but since the French Fathers did not set up any primary schools, the question of language for school did not come up.

<sup>28</sup> Reprinted adaptations of Plissoneau's Pidgin catechism are available and in use to the present day.

<sup>29</sup> St. Joseph's Missionary Society (more commonly known as the Mill Hill Mission) was the only British Catholic missionary society. However, its members were from Europe and Ireland, as well as Britain.

a party of four: Monsignor William Campling, the Prefect Apostolic, and Fathers William O'Kelly, Benedict Robinson, and Michael Moran. Initially they only took responsibility for the Victoria Division, the southernmost division on the coast of the province. Since they were the first resident missionaries to return to this area after the war, they immediately reopened as many missions in the Victoria Division as the four of them could staff. The work of their German predecessors, the leadership of the Cameroonian catechists during the war years, and the growth of the number of Catholic Christians created a great demand for the services of priests throughout the southern divisions. A few weeks after their arrival, in preparation for Easter mass, Fathers Campling and Moran heard over 900 confessions at one mission. "On his first trek away from the coast, Father Campling traveled 650 miles, heard 1,694 confessions, distributed 2,011 communions, administered 82 baptisms and married 10 couples" (O'Neil 1991:19). As mentioned above, this attests to the active involvement of catechists. There were 44 catechists in the mission when the Mill Hill Fathers arrived and requests for more catechists from communities that did not have them (O'Neil 1991:16). The instruction and supervision of catechists and the demands for the distribution of sacraments created an immediate demand for more priests. "In Uganda I have seen the great necessity for more priests but I have never dreamt of anything like the pressing need here," wrote Campling to Francis Henry, the Superior General of the mission in London (O'Neil 1991:18). The following year, Campling wrote Henry urgently requesting six more priests to be assigned to the Cameroons:

In two large divisions—Kumba and Mamfe—there is no priest. There are a dozen places where we could erect most prosperous missions were we able to do so. These six new Fathers would only relieve the high tension of the work until others arrive. (Campling 1924)

The Mill Hill Fathers were well received by nearly everyone on their arrival in the Cameroons. The Resident, V. Fitzherbert Ruxton, helped the Fathers by offering them property and buildings in the Victoria Division that had formerly been used by the German Army. The colonial officers were also anxious to have the Mill Hill Fathers take responsibility for the mission work in the Bamenda Division, and in 1923, the year after their arrival, Rome responded by creating a new prefecture for Mill Hill that coincided with the boundaries of the province of the Southern Cameroons. The new ecclesiastical province now included the Bamenda Division, territory that was formerly the domain of the French Fathers. Father Moran volunteered to take over the missions in the Bamenda Division, and on 13 May 1923 Father Bintner gave Moran the keys to the Shisong Mission and withdrew to



Dschang in the French Cameroons (Lafon 1988:77).<sup>30</sup> The Divisional Officer at Bamenda wrote, "The arrival of an English Father in the Division has been welcomed by one and all, even the Fon"<sup>31</sup> (O'Neil 1991:25).

### **Mill Hill Fathers' Initial Language Choices**

The Mill Hill Fathers began to employ Pidgin on their arrival in the Cameroons; however, their continued use of Pidgin did not reflect their beliefs about the importance of local Cameroonian languages. Flynn cites the Society's constitution as evidence for their general value for the vernacular:

Special attention shall be given to the language of the country so as to learn to speak it correctly and possess it thoroughly. . . . No Ecclesiastical Superior shall employ permanently those new missionaries who do not yet know the language of the country, nor shall the Council of the Mission declare them sufficiently acquainted with it except after careful examination. (Flynn ca. 1990)

Campling shared this value for local languages and expressed in his earliest letters his intention to learn the Duala language along with the other Fathers (Campling 1922). Yet, despite this evidence for the importance of local languages, several factors influenced the Mill Hill Fathers' decision to use Pidgin instead of vernacular languages in some circumstances.

One factor was that Pidgin met an immediate need. The Fathers were immediately able to hear confessions from Cameroonians who knew Pidgin. Even though Pidgin is a distinct language with its own vocabulary and grammar, as speakers of Standard English the Fathers were able to recognize enough cognates to understand much of the Pidgin they heard. The Fathers regarded Pidgin as barbaric, yet they admitted it was immensely useful and their main medium of communication. They often cited examples of its peculiarity in their letters home:

It is remarkably strange but all--at least the great majority of the natives, all along the West Coast and here in the Cameroons speak what is called Pidgin English, —Broken English and Bush English. Thus, before we had had time to learn any of the numerous languages we were able to hear confessions in this atrocious language. The penitent says "Me thief for chop" which means he was hungry and stole food to eat. Chop is the word used all over for food. (Campling 1922)

Another reason for the Fathers' choice of Pidgin was that it already functioned as a *lingua franca* in Victoria Division, which manifested an unusual density of

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<sup>30</sup> Possibly the only party who was not pleased were the French Fathers. They dutifully turned over their labors of the past three years to Michael Moran, a lone, inexperienced English priest.

<sup>31</sup> Local chief.



languages even by African standards. Recent linguistic research estimates that there are over 80 language groups residing in the territory that was the Southern Cameroons (Grimes 2000). Because employment on the plantations drew migrant workers from all over West Africa, the concentration of languages represented in the Victoria Division was disproportionately higher. In a circular letter that Father O'Kelly wrote a few years later describing the life and work of the Catholic Sisters<sup>32</sup> in the Cameroons, he mentions the languages found on the coast:

The sisters are working chiefly with and for the Bakwiri tribe, as far as their immediate vicinity is concerned. But in the Victoria Division, one meets members of nearly all the Southern Cameroons tribes, drawn from French Cameroons as well--by the lure of Plantation Work, or Government Service of some kind, or European household work, or 'factory', i.e., West African Trading Companies' Stores. One meets in the Sisters' area of operations, Bakwiri, Bota, Balundu, Bakundu, Bakossi, Yaunde, Bakoko, Bali, Batanga, Duala, Basossi, Isaangeli, and diversified natives of Mamfe and Bamenda Divisions; not to mention Nigerians of all kinds, and the Mahommedan Hausa. (O'Kelly [ca.1931])

Frederick Migeod, a contemporary British visitor to the Southern Cameroons, described the linguistic diversity as coming from even farther afield in West Africa:

Besides the tribes of the immediate neighborhood, there are Yaounde, Duala, and Hausa, and from farther still are Togoland natives, Sierra Leone, Mende, Kroomen from along the coast to the west, and Batanga down south. (Migeod 1925:21)

A third reason the Fathers continued to employ Pidgin was the enormous legacy of mission work that they inherited from the previous Catholic missions compared to their own limited numbers. As of 1913, the Pallotines had 22 Europeans (8 Fathers, 11 Brothers and 3 Sisters) working in five mission stations in the southern prefecture (Stukart ca.1965:18). During the years 1912-16 and 1920-23, the Sacred Heart Fathers had 9 priests and 8 brothers working in three missions in the northern prefecture (O'Neil 1991:24). At the beginning of World War I, the combined totals for both prefectures were 54,458 baptized Catholics and 24,545 catechumens preparing for baptisms. Among the 300 Catholic schools established there were 314 teachers and 29,259 children (Stukart ca.1965:16). Granted that the churches and schools abandoned at the beginning of the war were not the same in scope eight years later, the four Mill Hill Fathers nonetheless found themselves "trekking" constantly to accommodate the expectations of the established churches. The constant encounter with so many ethnic groups militated against learning the language of any but the largest of them.

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<sup>32</sup> The Mill Hill Sisters began work in the Cameroons in 1925 (O'Neil 1991:29).

Consequently, despite Campling's expressed intention to learn Duala, this did not happen. In an interview Migeod had with two Mill Hill Fathers a year after they had arrived, the Fathers conceded that they had not succeeded in learning any local vernaculars:

I discussed the language question with Fathers Kelly and Moran. Finding English so well established, the Mission, after a tentative effort in the way of Duala, Yaunde, Bakwiri, or some other language, had practically decided to adopt English, which is the widest spread and needs no translations—a course I told them I fully agreed with. (Migeod 1925:21)

## **Pan-African Policies Affecting Language Development in Cameroon**

The Christian missions operating in Cameroon before World War I initiated their work with ideologies and policies that favored the development and use of vernacular languages. These ideologies were still in evidence after the war in 1926 when the British government and Christian missions operating in British African colonial dependencies collaborated on an educational policy that endorsed the learner's language. This was a fundamental element in the policy of adaptation, whereby education was to be effectively adapted to African realities. This principle notwithstanding, this section will demonstrate that other factors prevailed in eventually privileging English as a medium of education to the exclusion of all other languages in mission schools.

### ***Post-World War I Influences on Language Policy***

In 1925 the British government issued a policy document that marked a shift in its role regarding missions and colonial education. Hitherto, the British government had allowed a laissez-faire policy towards missions and colonial education in the Southern Cameroons. Significantly, the only mention of education in the League of Nations Mandate (1922) was that missions should be free to create schools, and the overall impression is one of freedom for missions in education. In contrast, the 1925 policy statement, *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*, marked a shift in governmental responsibility for educational policy, not just for the Cameroons, but also for all British dependencies in Africa. This new emphasis is evident in the opening words after the preamble:

Government welcomes and will encourage all voluntary educational effort which conforms to the general policy. But it reserves to itself the general direction of educational policy and the supervision of all

This new educational policy for the British African colonies was produced by an Advisory Committee that was created through the efforts of J.H. Oldham to protect missionary interests in African educational policy. As Secretary of the International Missionary Council, Oldham was concerned about any new British colonial regulations that would impinge on the mission societies' programs in education, especially language requirements that were hostile to the missionaries' pro-vernacular stance. In 1923, Oldham commented on the weak position of missionary societies in the face of government regulation prior to the formation of the Advisory Committee: "As things stand now, we are absolutely at the mercy of Governors and Directors of Education, who may have an antimissionary bias or who may be bureaucratic in their doings" (quoted in Sivonen 1995:67). Oldham advocated the Advisory Committee as a means for missionary societies to influence British colonial educational policy.

Another of Oldham's strategies for mitigating the effects of government intervention in mission schooling and influencing opinions among missionary societies was what Sivonen (1995:54) terms "commission policy." This was the use of a research commission to influence policy. One such commission was a British-American Commission to study mission education in India led by Alexander Fraser, Oldham's brother-in-law. Another was a commission to study education in Africa, funded by the Phelps-Stokes Fund. Oldham used the reports of these commissions, especially the Phelps-Stokes Commission with which he was essentially in agreement, to influence mission and government language policy.

The Phelps-Stokes Commission<sup>34</sup> was an international delegation commissioned to investigate educational practices in Africa and to make recommendations to missionary societies concerning African educational policy. The members of the Phelps-Stokes Commission believed that American institutions dedicated to Negro education such as the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes had successfully adapted their programs to the needs of the American Negro, and they believed that they could discover similar examples of successful educational adaptation in Africa. *Adaptation* was the operative word, and the Commission's understanding of successful adaptation was interpreted through an ideology "which rejected the excessive

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<sup>33</sup> Formally it was the *Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies*; here and henceforth it is simply referred to as the *Advisory Committee*.

<sup>34</sup> There were two successive Phelps-Stokes Commissions with overlapping membership from the first to the second. The first Commission's itinerary was through countries of western and southern Africa in 1920 and the second Commission's was through countries of eastern Africa in 1924 (Jones 1922; Jones [1925]).

westernizing influence of European education in Africa" (Sivonen 1995:58). With respect to language policy, the Phelps-Stokes Report advocated adaptation through the use of vernacular languages in education:

No phase of educational adaptation requires more careful consideration than the languages of instruction, . . . [beginning with the principle] that every people have an inherent right to their Native tongue. (Jones 1922:25)

With this in mind, the Report recommended that African vernacular languages should be used in the lower elementary grades and European languages taught in the upper grades (Jones 1922:26).

The Advisory Committee's first 1925 policy statement made no such specific recommendations concerning the language of instruction, though it did advocate the "study of the educational use of the vernaculars" (Advisory Committee 1965:49). However, the Advisory Committee continued its association with the Phelps-Stokes Commission. This became even closer when the Advisory Committee appointed its Secretary, Hans Vischer, to the second Phelps-Stokes Commission to East Africa. The report of the second Commission reiterated that the vernacular should come first in African schooling, and instruction in European languages should be postponed until the secondary grades (Jones [1925]:22).

Members of the Phelps-Stokes Commission and the Advisory Committee had an opportunity to disseminate their views to a wider missionary audience at the Le Zoute Conference. In September 1926, the International Missionary Council convened over 200 representatives from Protestant missions in Africa to discuss mission strategy, principally educational policy. The conference was held at Le Zoute, Belgium. From the perspective of the Advisory Committee,

Le Zoute was intended as a forum where Dr. Jones, Oldham and Lugard<sup>35</sup> could introduce the principal aims of Britain's new educational policy to Protestant missions working in Africa: these aims were the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions and the collaboration of missions with governments in accordance with the 1925 White Paper.<sup>36</sup> The Conference was thus a comprehensive occasion to crown the policy of adaptation and the beginning of work in association. (Sivonen 1995:136)

The Le Zoute Conference produced no new language policy recommendations; it simply reiterated the Phelps-Stokes proposal that European language instruction be postponed to the secondary grades (Smith 1926:113). However, not all missionaries

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Jesse Jones was the Chairman of the Phelps-Stokes Commissions. Frederick Lugard and J.H. Oldham were on the Advisory Committee.

<sup>36</sup> Reference is to the aforementioned 1925 Advisory Committee (1965) policy document.

attending the Le Zoute Conference accepted these recommendations without reservations. Some regarded the Advisory Committee and its policy statements as further evidence of the inappropriate intrusion of the British government into mission education.<sup>37</sup>

In 1926 the Advisory Committee began to formulate its own policy statement on the language of instruction. It circulated drafts of its proposed policy to various missionary educators to get their input. One recipient of the draft policy was Alexander Fraser, whose response is worth considering for a number of reasons. Fraser had recently been appointed to establish a model African school at Achimota, Gold Coast, based on the principles of the Phelps-Stokes Commission. The new school was intended to be a showcase for educational adaptation. Fraser had accepted the appointment on condition that his Vice-Principal be James Aggrey,<sup>38</sup> a native of the Gold Coast and member of both Phelps-Stokes Commissions (Ward 1965). In addition to his Gold Coast responsibilities, Fraser's response is also relevant because he was contemporaneously working on a proposal for the Nigerian Educational Code with Edward Arnett, Resident for the Southern Cameroons (Fraser 1926b). The forthcoming Nigerian Education Code would also apply to the Southern Cameroons.

In his response to the Advisory Committee, Fraser expressed wholehearted agreement with the principles of adaptation and vernacular education, but he did not think the policy was workable given current conditions. While he affirmed that "the aim of education in Tropical Africa should be to preserve and develop a vernacular"<sup>39</sup> (Fraser 1926a:1), he conceded that he did not have the staff in the Gold Coast to implement the use of the vernacular as a medium of education. Neither did he think that Africans would accept the vernacular in place of English as a medium of education:

We have a history of education behind us and have not got a clean slate on which to write. The schools here have been taught in English from the first standard, and people have come to associate English alone with progress. Accordingly, we could not at once start vernacular training colleges, even if we had the means to hand in the shape of British or Africans who could use the vernaculars as a medium of instruction. . . . We cannot now just cut ourselves free from the incumbrances we have created. The Africans have to pay the piper

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<sup>37</sup> See Sivonen (1995:98-108) and Thompson (1995:244-48) for discussions of issues in missionary/government collaboration in African education during this period.

<sup>38</sup> Aggrey was prominent for his educational attainment (doctorate and seminary professorship) in the United States and as the only black commissioner on the Phelps-Stokes Commissions (Anderson 1998).

<sup>39</sup> This clause did not actually appear in the published version of the memorandum (Advisory Committee 1927).



in education, and they will call the tune. If they demand English education early they cannot be refused straight away. We will have to work gradually with them till they see where and how the vernacular and English training should be related.<sup>40</sup> (Fraser 1926a:2-3)

Fraser sent an additional copy of his response to the Advisory Committee to one of its members, J.H. Oldham.<sup>41</sup> In his cover letter, Fraser confided to Oldham that, “whilst almost everyone does lip service to the Vernaculars here, Africans and Europeans, not one per cent probably believe in them one bit” (Fraser 1926c).

So Fraser was enthusiastic about vernacular languages at the ideal policy level, but at the practical level he was skeptical that they could be implemented. His reservations about popular acceptance of the vernacular were telling, and they were not unique.

In Africa this view of the [Advisory] Committee that English teaching should start only at the secondary stage, which would have excluded from the English language Africans who had been through primary education, was condemned very clearly. It was opposed by colonial officials and many mission representatives.<sup>42</sup> (Sivonen 1995:126)

This tension between the advocacy of vernacular languages by policy makers and the actual demand for English as a medium of instruction is evident in the subsequent educational policies. The 1926 Nigeria Educational Code exemplified concessions to demands that English be introduced earlier in the elementary grades. It advocated a policy that the vernacular should be the medium of instruction for the lower standards, but from Standard III onwards, English reading should gradually replace vernacular reading, and by Standards IV, V and VI, English should be compulsory (Nigeria Education Code 1927). The Nigerian Code also recommended that the best way to improve the quality of education would be the establishment of central boarding schools, a policy that in a multilingual society would militate against the use of any one vernacular.

In 1927 the Advisory Committee finally released its own vernacular language policy for the whole of British Africa. It commended the Nigeria language policy, but also conceded,

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<sup>40</sup> Eleven years later Achimota had still not introduced vernaculars as a medium of instruction in the lower primary grades (Standards I, II, and III). Kindergarten was divided and taught in four vernacular languages, but from Standard I, English was the medium of instruction and the vernaculars were subjects of instruction (Achimota Review 1927-1937 1937:11-13).

<sup>41</sup> Oldham was also Fraser’s brother-in-law (Sivonen 1995:54).

<sup>42</sup> In another example of testimony opposing local languages in education, the Governor of Sierra Leone claimed, “Parents would refuse to send their children to school if an African language were chosen for teaching instead of English” (Sivonen 1995:126).



Any attempt, therefore, to delay unduly the introduction of English into African schools would be regarded as the attempt of Government to hold back the African from legitimate advance in civilization. . . . If our educational policy, even though it be a transitional policy, does not meet this demand, . . . it will not gain the necessary African support. (Advisory Committee 1927:10-11)

The Advisory Committee also conceded that promotion of African vernaculars as a medium of instruction did not imply the educational use of *all* African vernaculars; given the multiplicity of African languages, sometimes one language must be favored over another, with the opinions of Europeans weighing heavily in the selection process. It cited the report of the second Phelps-Stokes Commission:

The process of selecting the native languages of greatest value to the native people is often exceedingly difficult. . . . The testimony of Europeans of natives who speak a particular dialect is likely to be prejudiced heavily by that knowledge.... There are also geographical elements that influence the value of a dialect, such as the number of people who speak it, the status and potentiality of the people as compared with others of a different dialect, and territorial proximity. (Jones [1925] quoted in Advisory Committee 1927:6)

This last sentence appears to contradict and ultimately abandon the original Phelps-Stokes dictum that educationally, “every people have an inherent right to their Native tongue” (Jones 1922:25). However, not everyone involved in African education was so jaundiced against the vernacular as a medium of instruction. Professor Victor Murray, a contemporary critic of the British Government’s educational policies, advocated the advanced development of African indigenous vernacular literature, and he disapproved of the Advisory Committee policy of favoring one African language over another:

The language may be to the philological expert a “dialect,” but to the people who speak it it is their way of expressing themselves, and presumably has as much right to a place in the sun as any other people’s way of expressing themselves. . . . Moreover, even if, as a matter of practical politics, it is not possible to train European teachers and print books in every African “dialect” that exists, whose business is it to decide what shall and what shall not be propagated? (Murray 1938:141)

#### ***Hinsley and the pan-African Catholic Response***

Amidst all these discussions provoked by the Phelps-Stokes Commissions, the Advisory Committee and the Le Zoute Conference, the Catholic mission agencies were not as directly engaged in the debate as their Protestant counterparts. There was no direct contact between the Commission and the Mill Hill Mission. Campling had not yet arrived in the Cameroons when the first Phelps-Stokes Commission visited mission schools in West Africa. In Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, the

Commission visited and commended the educational work of various Catholic missions, including the work under the supervision of Bishop Shanahan at Calabar, the closest English speaking Catholic mission to the Cameroons. However, the Commission was a Protestant endeavor, illustrated in the balance of reporting: the four pages describing the Free Church of Scotland Mission overshadow the short paragraph that the report dedicates to the Catholic work in Calabar.<sup>43</sup> The first Commission also visited the port of Douala in the French Cameroons, but only for six days (19-25 December 1920), and no mention is made of contact with Catholic missions.

The Advisory Committee nevertheless did consult the Catholic missions working in Africa. Bishop Bidwell, assistant to Cardinal Bourne of Westminster, represented the Catholic missions on the Advisory Committee. Bidwell facilitated the distribution of the Advisory Committee's various memoranda to the Catholic missionary societies operating in British Africa, including the Mill Hill Missionaries (Bidwell n.d.). However, there was no single Catholic mission strategy conference comparable to the Le Zoute Conference. Instead, the concerted Catholic response to the Advisory Committee came later with the Africa tour of Bishop Hinsley in 1928-29.<sup>44</sup>

Hinsley undertook a tour of the Catholic missions in Africa to mobilize the Catholic response to the British government's new educational policies in Africa. Hinsley's official task was to conduct a "study of the Catholic schools of British Africa in view of the co-operation with the Government in its educational plans for the natives of its African colonies" (*The Tablet* 1929a). Hinsley took two years to visit Catholic missions in the British dependencies in Africa, convening conferences en route in Dar es Salaam and Lagos to discuss educational issues with mission leaders. In an interview cited by the British Catholic magazine *The Tablet*, Hinsley stated that he was "in absolute agreement in principle with the educational schemes as set out by the British Colonial Office between the years of 1925 and 1927," and if these initiatives had not yet yielded immediate results at the local level, this was no surprise.

For, after all, it was only quite recently that Governments in tropical Africa began to take part in popular education; and, speaking generally and taking East Africa as an example, it was not until 1924

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<sup>43</sup> Also understandable because Mr. and Mrs. Wilkie, of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, were members of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission and had experience in Calabar (Taylor 1996:174).

<sup>44</sup> Arthur Hinsley (later Cardinal Hinsley) was rector of the English College, Rome before his tour of Africa.

or thereabouts that the Government began to co-operate with religious missions in the education of native Africans. It was therefore not expected that there could be any wonderful results. (*The Tablet* 1929b)

Hinsley contrasted the religious priorities of the mission schools in their historical context with the contemporary educational program set out for Africa by the British government:

In every mission there was a school where, as well as the truths of the faith, good manners and “reading” could be learned by all. . . . As time went on this state of affairs would become more orderly; classes of children of the same age would be formed, but always the first purpose of the mission-school was the teaching of the catechism rather than one or all of the three r’s. . . . So it is not surprising that when the education-officers of the various colonies agreed to enforce a common programme in 1925 the poor mission-schools were found wanting by the inspectors who went round with an ideal school in mind. (Keldany n.d.)

Notwithstanding the historical reasons for the state of mission schools in Africa, Hinsley did not feel that it was acceptable for the Catholics to continue to operate “poor mission-schools.” His internal message to the Catholic missionary community was a call for a strategic allocation of resources towards their educational operations:

Collaborate with all your power, and where it is impossible to carry on both the immediate task of evangelization and your educational work, neglect your churches in order to perfect your schools. (Oliver 1965:275<sup>45</sup>)

In an article describing Hinsley’s tour, *The Tablet* estimated that there were 1,180 Catholic educational institutions in Africa, with a total attendance of 60,000 students (*The Tablet* 1929a). With so many schools in such a variety of circumstances, there was certainly wide variation in the quality of schooling. Hinsley’s concern was for the isolated bush schools that fell short of the British colonial government’s expectations for adequate schooling.

### **Implementation of British Colonial Educational Policy in Cameroon**

It is intriguing and sometimes puzzling how the adaptionist ideals for education that were so evident in missionary rhetoric seemed to have so little effect on education policy in Cameroon. The use of the mother tongue for the medium of education was characterized as fundamental to adaptionist principles, yet the evidence from the historical accounts of the missions in Cameroon is that local African languages were not used in mission schools. The following sections will consider how the implementation of the colonial Education Code actually served to

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted from the Dar es Salaam Conference of Bishops, August 1928.

accomplish the opposite: English became firmly established as the medium for schooling, while Pidgin and local African languages were relegated to other domains of mission life.

In 1926, the new Nigerian Education Ordinance had become law, applying to the Cameroons as well as Nigeria. Edward Arnett, the Resident for the Cameroons Province, subsequently convened and chaired a committee representing those agencies which were involved in education in the Cameroons, principally the Catholic and Basel missions. Arnett defined the object of the committee in his report to the League of Nations: "One of the first objects of the committee is to secure co-operation between Government and the Missions in the field of education" (United Kingdom 1927:64). Despite its rhetoric of cooperation, the means that the government used to secure cooperation was unilaterally to refuse to allow any new schools to be created without its approval.<sup>46</sup>

While Government is anxious to give every encouragement to the Missions in the work of education, and wishes to bring into schools of the Province as many children as is possible with the means at its disposal, it has decided that the time has come to put a stop to the indiscriminate opening of schools which are inadequately staffed, badly equipped, and insufficiently supervised. (United Kingdom 1927:66)

The local committee also discussed the use of the vernacular languages in schools as contemplated by the Advisory Committee memorandum on the vernacular. In this case one can recognize Fraser's observation regarding the common lip service to the vernacular. The committee had before it the texts of the Advisory Committee memorandum and the Nigerian Education Ordinance, both of which endorsed the value of the vernacular, and Arnett had even worked with Fraser, a proponent of the vernacular, on the formulation of the Nigerian Ordinance. Yet Arnett's committee set these considerations aside in favor of English instruction. The missions were only prepared to implement vernacular education in two African languages, Duala and Bali (Mungaka), which were already being used by the Basel Mission schools as media of instruction:

The committee are in favour of giving instruction in the vernacular for the first three years of school life, and it is believed that children so instructed will make better progress when they are instructed in English than those who are taught in English from the beginning.

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<sup>46</sup> Taylor (1996:176), in his history of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in Nigeria, comments on the threat of this policy: "...government inspectors could now order the closing or opening of a school, and this was a serious challenge to every Christian denomination's school system in anglophone Africa."

Practical difficulties will prevent this object from being achieved for some time to come. . . . (United Kingdom 1927:65)

Significantly, Pidgin also arose as a topic of concern. Arnett conceded in his report that the English employed in the Cameroonian classrooms was not always Standard English. Both the Advisory Committee memorandum and the Nigerian Ordinance warned against the dangers of poor English instruction, yet the local committee allowed “teaching in English with a limited use of ‘pidgin’ English as a means of instruction was necessary” (United Kingdom 1927:64-65). This is probably a reference to the Mill Hill Mission schools’ use of Pidgin, which Arnett noted somewhat disapprovingly elsewhere in his report:

The Mill Hill Mission has adopted the Government syllabus in its entirety, but, owing to the lack of qualified native teachers and the diversity of tribal languages represented among their scholars, gives instruction in English which frequently degenerates into “pidgin-English”. (United Kingdom 1927:74)

#### ***Catholic Response to the Government’s Demand for Cooperation***

The Mill Hill Mission’s response to the government’s new education policy may be explained by the fact that the individual missionaries felt little sense of responsibility for academic instruction in the Catholic schools. In the Cameroons there were many Catholic bush schools such as the one described by Mockerie (1934), where the Fathers were “not concerned with the education of scholars, but with the catechizing of the people who were being prepared for baptism and confirmation.” Mgr. Peter Rogan, who replaced Campling as the leader of the Mill Hill Mission, objected to the new Education Ordinance in part as a reaction to the government’s new intrusiveness in matters of Catholic schooling. However, he also foresaw that registering the Fathers as school managers would tie them down to the mission station schools and they would no longer be able to conduct the visitation of outlying mission stations. Rogan often complained in his letters to Biermans, the Superior General of the mission, about the inappropriateness of the new Education Code:

I sent Your Lordship a copy of the West African Education Code some time ago. It applies to the primitive, unsettled and not completely administered Province of the Cameroons as well. We have as many Superintendents of Education as we have District Commissioners. The Sisters had to be registered before they were allowed to teach in an ordinary [elementary] Mission school. All Superiors of Missions have to be registered before they are allowed to BUILD EVEN A WATTLE-AND-DAUB SCHOOL on their OWN station. They are registered as Managers and have to give an undertaking that they do not occupy themselves with other work. Fathers are not allowed to teach in ANY school, no matter how



primitive, until they have been registered. But you can see for yourself, My Lord, what the demands and conditions of the Code are. (emphasis in original, Rogan 1928b)

Rogan distinguished between the task of evangelization and the task of education, just as Hinsley had. However, Rogan ranked the two in reverse order: for him, evangelistic work had priority over educational work. Schools were incidental to the pioneer missionary work of preparing people for baptism. These instructional programs for preparing catechumens for baptism were called *catechumenates*; Rogan was successful in convincing Arnett’s administration that catechumenates were not bona fide schools and were thus exempt from the regulations of the Education Ordinance. The conspicuous number of catechumenates compared to schools is illustrated in Table 4, which appeared in Arnett’s 1927 report to the League of Nations:

Native Helpers	333
Christians	17,210
Catechumens	8,792
Catechumenates	282
Schools	6
Churches licensed for celebration of marriages	22

**Table 4. Mill Hill Mission Returns (United Kingdom 1928:50)**

In the balance of work represented by the six schools on one side and the 282 catechumenates on the other, the training and orientation of the Mill Hill Fathers was clearly tilted towards the preparing of catechumens for baptism. However, even six schools required teaching staff, and by February 1928 Rogan was urgently requesting that Biermans send him British priests “with degrees” who were prepared to do educational work (Rogan 1928c).

However, pioneer mission work and educational work differed significantly in their choice and use of languages, and it is worth exploring the expectations of each type of task. Pioneer mission work in the Cameroons was typically conducted by one or two priests assigned to an isolated mission station distant from the coast. They would give instruction in the Christian faith to catechumens preparatory to baptism, as well as carry out the range of priestly functions for the Christian community. As soon as possible, much of the instruction would be delegated to catechists who lived

in out-stations distant from the mission. However, since the priestly functions could not be delegated, the Fathers would take turns in “trekking,” making visitations to outlying areas in order to administer baptism, confession, and communion. Such pioneer missionaries were often the only European within miles, and they only rarely saw their fellow missionaries assigned to other mission stations.<sup>47</sup> At the beginning, they would use interpreters to communicate with Cameroonians; eventually they were expected to learn a local language, usually the one closest to the mission station where they were resident.

A typical example of pioneer mission work was the founding of the Njinikom mission among the Bikom people in the Bamenda Division three hundred miles from the coast. Father Ivo Stokman (1928) describes his first year at Njinikom in a letter to Biermans. Father Jacobs had established Njinikom as a mission in May 1927. For six months Jacobs conducted the mission by himself; he “did not meet a priest in all that time and saw two white men who passed Njinikom, exploring the country.” In November 1927 Father Stokman joined Jacobs, and from then on they took turns trekking, “walking (which is climbing here) for 7 to 8 hours” from outstation to outstation for weeks at a time. “When one of us is on trek, the other has to hear 600—700 confessions in a weekend.” It was a priority to make the sacraments accessible to the people, and Stokman was proud of the fact that since he had arrived nearly a year previously, “Njinikom has not been without Mass for a single day.”

Stokman’s letter indicated that in his first year he was still using Pidgin as a way to communicate with the people in the absence of any other language in common. Although the people of Njinikom spoke the Kom language, Stokman was using Pidgin among the Njinikom mission domestic staff and probably using it with an interpreter for his sermons. In his visitations to outstations, he would have certainly resorted to Pidgin and interpreters among those outstations that spoke languages other than Kom, such as in neighboring Bafut.

By 1930, indications were that Stokman and Jacobs were making progress in their learning of Kom. Father Wall’s visitation<sup>48</sup> report commended their language learning and linguistic research:

[Father Stokman] is making great progress in his endeavors to reduce to writing the Bikom language. This language is spoken by about

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<sup>47</sup> The Mill Hill Missionaries convened in Cameroon once every four years. Some never met other priests who worked at mission stations in other parts of the country (Rogan 1931a).

<sup>48</sup> In this context a *visitation* was an official review of the Mill Hill missions and personnel within the Prefecture of Buea, British Cameroons. It was conducted by Father John Wall, on behalf of Bishop Biermans, Superior General of St. Joseph’s Society, Mill Hill.

8,000 people. Father Jacobs too has been busy investigating the language and is, I believe, fairly familiar with it for conversational purposes. Father Stockman is in correspondence with Professor Westerman[n]<sup>49</sup> and is adopting his phonemes. (Wall 1930)

O'Neil (1991:69) also reports that in the following year Stokman introduced prayers and Gospel readings in Kom during the Mass.

### ***Expansion of Catholic English-medium schools***

The Mill Hill Mission's initial response to the Education Ordinance was to limit the English-language mission schools to a small number (six) and to distinguish between catechumenates and such schools. However in 1931, the Mill Hill Fathers acceded to a shift in strategy and began to allocate significant resources towards creating a greater number of schools. This change in strategy was probably in no small part due to Hinsley's influence.

In their General Meeting, the Fathers resolved that "every Central Mission Station MUST aim at having AT LEAST an Infants' School"<sup>50</sup> (Report of the Second General Meeting... 1931). This signified that the Fathers were no longer going to support only six schools, but that they were prepared to expand schooling to all the mission stations. They did this knowing full well that these schools would all come under the Nigeria Education Ordinance. In the dichotomy of Hinsley, they chose schooling over evangelism, which obliged them to put more resources towards schooling and left fewer resources for the rest of mission work. In 1937 Rogan complained about the significant proportion of mission personnel dedicated to education work:

Owing to the DEMANDS of the Nigerian Education Code—to qualify us for a grant—Fathers STAATS, BURKE-KENNEDY, NELISSEN, SCHGOR, are "seconded" EXCLUSIVELY for Education!! Also, I had to give a guarantee that the Assistant Fathers in [seven mission stations] would devote as much of their time as ordinary Mission duties would permit to PERSONAL SUPERVISION of the Schools. . . . (emphasis in original, Rogan 1937)

This complaint illustrates the mixed sentiments that Rogan had concerning schooling as a mission strategy. On the one hand, Rogan was certainly proud of the Mill Hill Mission's accomplishments in education in the Cameroons, which had succeeded in attracting Cameroonians to the Catholic schools and to the Catholic

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<sup>49</sup> Diedrich Westermann was a German linguist associated with the London-based International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. He proposed an orthography for writing African languages (Sivonen 1995:123).

<sup>50</sup> Pre-primary "kindergarten" for ages four to ten years old.

faith. Rogan noted with glee how it was forcing the Protestant missions to change their priorities as well and put more emphasis on schooling:

... the Protestant Societies are now concentrating on EDUCATION instead of Religion, on SCHOOLS instead of Churches. For they know that the Natives will attend the best equipped and most efficiently staffed schools. (emphasis in original, Rogan 1938)

Yet Rogan also expressed wistfulness about “pure” missionary work, in the days before it had become characterized as an educational endeavor. In the farewell newsletter that he wrote before leaving the Cameroons in 1947, he reminisced about the time before school became a mission priority:

I told Bishop Biermans several times in letters that he was in AFRICA when “Africa was at its BEST” from the missionary point of view!!! . . . No motors, no big roads, no cinemas, no papers, AND NO EDUCATION Department!!! (emphasis in original, O’Neil 1991:161)

For Rogan, Mill Hill’s education strategy in the Cameroons represented conflict with the government and the assignment of personnel resources that could otherwise been used for the traditional mission work he valued most.

#### ***English as the Language of Schooling and Pidgin as the Language of the Catechumenate***

The case made for using the vernacular in schooling appeared to be strong, with the Advisory Committee’s memoranda and the Nigerian Education code providing the ideological backing it needed. Nevertheless, three factors converged to establish English as the language of school for the Catholics in the Cameroons.

Paradoxically, the first factor involved the demands of the Nigerian Educational Code. The Code came with highly defined expectations about acceptable formal education. For the missionaries to implement a vernacular curriculum that met the Code’s requirements, they would have had to translate all the existing educational materials from English into a variety of vernacular languages. This would have included translating the syllabus as dictated by the Code, as well as pedagogical materials such as student textbooks and teachers’ manuals. They would also have had to devise systems of teacher training and school inspection to support education in those same languages. While Phelps-Stokes and the Advisory Committee seemed to advocate exactly such adaptations, the reality was that the missionaries were still struggling with how to represent local languages in written form. They were in no position to cope with the translation requirements of such an elaborate Code. In this respect, Rogan’s vehement response to the Code was not just cant against an intrusion of the government into the mission’s domain. Rather, he saw that the Code put the accreditation bar too high for the missions with the pedagogical resources

they had at their disposal. Standard English was the only language alternative that had the supporting pedagogical materials necessary to conduct formal education up to the standard of the Code.

In addition, the Code's requirements for certified staff disadvantaged the employment of teachers who spoke the vernacular. Since there were no secondary or normal schools in the Cameroons at this time, virtually no certified Cameroonian teachers were available. To meet the demands of teacher certification, the existing uncertified Cameroonian school staff had to be replaced by certified expatriate teachers, either Europeans or Nigerians. Neither of these latter groups would have spoken the local language; they would have used English as the principal medium of instruction with their students. Eventually the mission was able to develop a cadre of Cameroonian teachers by sending their elementary school graduates to Nigeria for further training. This training was in English, using English-language pedagogical materials, further reinforcing the position of English in the Mill Hill schools.

A second factor that propelled the mission towards the use of English was Bishop Hinsley's Africa tour to promote cooperation with the British government in education. Hinsley's injunction to the Catholic missions was that if they had to choose between evangelism and schooling, they should "perfect their schools." However, this maxim did not merely address the quality of Catholic schools in Africa. Improvement of existing schools also had the consequence of creating a demand for more schools. As Fraser remarked concerning the model school at Achimota in the Gold Coast,

Achimota is bound, unless it is futile, greatly to stimulate the desire for secondary education. . . . [T]he mere opening of Achimota has turned the attention of many on to secondary education who would have otherwise been content to let their children leave school at the 7<sup>th</sup> standard. (Quoted in Slater 1930)

In the Cameroons, Rogan tried to upgrade the quality of a few existing Mill Hill Mission schools. His initial response to the Code was to reduce the number of schools to six, thus reducing the scope of accreditation requirements. In the wake of Hinsley's tour, however, he was obliged to upgrade all the mission schools. By 1931 all the mission stations were required to have bona fide schools according to the Education Code. This, as we have seen, pushed them towards the use of English as a medium of instruction. Hinsley himself did not appear to have any particular language policy agenda, but his counsel to cooperate with the British government (i.e., upgrade the quality of schooling on their terms) resulted in more English-language schools in the Cameroons.



A third factor that promoted the use of English in education involved the expectations of the Africans themselves. J.W.C. Dougall, a member of the second Phelps-Stokes Commission and proponent of adaptive education for Africa, noted matter-of-factly that “the African in many cases does not want what we think is best for him”<sup>51</sup> (Quoted in King 1971:185). No matter how advantageous the missionaries regarded pedagogy in the vernacular, in the minds of Cameroonians, education was synonymous with instruction in English. Their own experience led them to suspect that adapted education was inferior, and they wanted nothing less than the education that the British had. “The importance of sound training in the colonial language and the so-called academic subjects was demonstrated daily to the Black Africans in their contact with the colonial representatives” (Bude 1985:75). With this legacy of expectation, it would have been very difficult for the Mill Hill Mission to establish formal accredited education that was not based on instruction in English.

A different set of circumstances surrounded the language choices in the catechumenate. The essential purpose of the catechumenate was to prepare catechumens for baptism and membership in Catholic churches. Its students were the young people, male and female, of Catholic families, as well as inquirers of all ages. Its official curriculum was the catechism itself, and the program lasted one year, possibly two or three, depending on the regularity of attendance (Report of the Second General Meeting... 1931). The teacher (catechist) was a man who had successfully completed a catechism class and had some further training by a missionary or senior catechist. Prior to the implementation of the Education Code, any distinction between religious instruction and schooling had been blurred. However, as a result of the Code, the essential differences between the two had to be emphasized, leading to distinct language choices in each domain.

A further dimension in considering the use of language in the catechumenate is the disparity between the official curriculum and what was actually taught. The official curriculum was more or less synonymous with the written catechism. However, the actual curriculum consisted of the catechism plus some reading, writing, arithmetic and personal hygiene. In many ways the catechumenates continued to be the same kinds of village schools they were before the 1926 Education Code was implemented. They continued to ignore the distinction between religious instruction and schooling.

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<sup>51</sup> Not to make too subtle a point, in his book on language policy in Cameroon, Rudolf Stumpf (1979:141) says that what missionaries and the most ethnocentric racists have in common is the desire to decide what is good for the Cameroonians.

In a telling episode in 1937, the heads of the Catholic missionary societies in Nigeria and the Cameroons sent a forceful resolution to the Nigeria Education Department denying its right to register catechumenates (Report of Conference... 1937). At issue was the practice of teaching school subjects in addition to the catechism. The Education Department claimed that the catechumenates had overstepped their province by teaching these subjects, and were actually practicing clandestine schooling. The missions claimed that they were simply teaching the rudiments of literacy and numeracy so that the catechumens could read their prayer books.

The fact that other subjects were taught in the catechumenate suggests that the languages of the catechumenate (vernaculars and Pidgin) were more than just languages of religious instruction. Languages that failed to make it into the formal education system were still in widespread use as languages of instruction in what appears to be an alternative schooling system. It also indicates that the same kind of schooling that the government had tried to curb through the Education Code was in fact widespread through the Cameroons eleven years later in the form of catechumenates. The evidence suggests that the British government was only partially successful in defining and controlling education in the Cameroons.

Ironically, in spite of the government's rhetoric about adapting education to native languages, it was the educational province of the catechumenate that proved to be most adaptive to Cameroonian languages. The government was ostensibly in favor of using local languages in education, but the accreditation requirements of the Education Code served to suppress the use of those languages in school. So the instructional settings that actually aligned with the Advisory Committee's language policy were those outside of the government's control.

Left to their own devices, the Mill Hill Fathers would have preferred to use the local vernaculars, where feasible, as media for instruction, and Pidgin where the local language was not yet developed or the congregation was too multilingual to use one local vernacular. They would have blurred the distinction between catechumenate and schooling, allowing religious instruction and "the three r's" to be taught in the same classroom without particular concern for syllabus or teacher certification. This was precisely the mission-schooling situation that Hinsley described as typical of African bush schools.

In assessing why the mission in some circumstances chose to use Pidgin instead of a vernacular language in the catechumenate, it is important to understand that Pidgin was not taught in the catechumenate. In contrast to the teaching of Standard

English in schools, Pidgin was a language that people were already using. The distinctive of language use in the catechumenate, as opposed to schools, was that the participants used languages that they knew. Catechists used their own vernacular language or Pidgin because they and their audience spoke one language or the other. If they were using a written Pidgin translation of the catechism, catechists sometimes had to translate it orally into a vernacular language for the benefit of those catechumens who did not understand Pidgin.

The Mill Hill missionaries' own personal use of Pidgin could lead one to conclude that the mission valued it more than the vernacular. The evidence of the missionaries' self-criticism on this point suggests otherwise. For example, Larry Flynn, a Mill Hill Father with Cameroon experience, is critical of the Mill Hill missionaries' excessive dependence on Pidgin. Flynn's argument is plausible: that the Mill Hill missionaries would have been more effective evangelists had they learned the local languages, rather than relying on Pidgin (Flynn ca. 1990). In the many places in the Cameroons where Pidgin was not commonly spoken, the missionaries could well have communicated better with more people by using a local vernacular instead of Pidgin. However, this and other instances of internal criticism among the Mill Hill missionaries is evidence that when individual missionaries did not learn a local language, they were not living up to their own ideals.

Understanding the language choice of the Catholic Church in the Cameroons must necessarily take into account the values and perceptions of the Cameroonians themselves regarding Pidgin and the vernacular. It has already been noted that for the missionaries, their use of Pidgin was a concession to circumstances where there were too many languages for them to learn any one vernacular. Yet utility in communication was not the only issue; the missionaries' feelings towards Pidgin were also influenced by their perception that it was English badly spoken and that it was contaminated by its associations with the immorality of life in the coastal plantations. Rogan even went so far as to say that Pidgin English was itself a part of an immoral society:

The mingling of so many men and women of different tribes in Victoria [Division], where "Bush English" becomes their "Mother Tongue", leads naturally to a very loose manner of living. And just as civilised white men in a "gold rush" soon become brutal in the lawless mining-camps, so nomad natives, both men and women, in the Victoria Division, soon cast off their native refinement. (Rogan 1931c)

However, the Cameroonians did not subscribe to this missionary dichotomy between the unspoiled upcountry vernacular cultures and the polluted coastal plantation culture.

Since the 1930s the 'coast' has had a special significance to people living in the 'interior' areas of Cameroon. . . . In geographical terms the 'coast' meant the plantations. . . . However, the 'coast' also represented economic opportunity, a better life full of bright lights, excitement and the wonder of the 'new'. (Lockhart 1994:32)

For the Cameroonians, Pidgin was a means of entrée to the world of the coast that was accessible to anyone able to go there to learn it.

### ***Basel Mission post-World War I Language Policies***

Following World War I, at first only Swiss citizens among the Basel missionaries were allowed to return to French Cameroon, and then only under the auspices of the Paris Mission (Keller 1969:58). By 1925 the Basel Mission was officially permitted to return to the British Cameroons along with German personnel, but the latter were warned against any "disloyalty" to the British colonial administration. They were also advised that only English or the vernacular (not German) would be permitted in the schools (Stumpf 1979:113). In 1926 the previously discussed Education Code was introduced into Cameroon. The Code promoted the use of the vernacular in the early grades, but when the government, Catholic Mission, and the Basel Mission met to discuss implementation of the Code, only the Basel Mission was prepared to use any vernacular languages in school, and only Duala<sup>52</sup> and Mungaka (United Kingdom 1927:65). Interestingly, the Basel Mission resumed the same policy for the use of Duala and Mungaka in schools that was opposed by the German administration, but in the policy climate immediately following the Le Zoute Conference, their use of vernacular languages found favor with the British colonial administration.

At first these vernacular schools were popular and their numbers expanded rapidly. By 1927 there were 299 Basel Mission vernacular schools with a total attendance of 7,155 boys and girls (Keller 1969:65). However, there was soon evident a growing desire for English instruction. In 1929 the Basel Mission opened three primary schools. The medium of instruction was still either Duala or Mungaka,

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<sup>52</sup> Following the partition of the German colony, the actual Duala-speaking area was located in the French Mandate. The British Resident was aware that the Basel Mission intended to continue to use Duala as a medium of instruction among non-Dualas located in the British Mandate (United Kingdom 1927:65).

but English<sup>53</sup> was offered as a subject. They only went as far as Standard IV, but because they taught English and followed the government syllabus, they offered the prospect of continued education in a Lower Middle School elsewhere. Over the next ten years there was a growing desire for primary school education with English instruction. Keller documents how primary schooling rose rapidly and vernacular schooling diminished rapidly in the 40's and 50's (see Table 5).

Year	Children attending primary schools:	Children attending vernacular schools and religious classes:
1935	532	4,480
1940	1,262	5,030
1944	4,035	6,817
1947	5,841	4,522
1951	8,223	1,169
1954	10,426	652
1956	14,032	277
1959	19,880	191

**Table 5. Basel Mission School Attendance (Keller 1969:66)**

During World War II there was opposition by Grassfields Fons to the use of Mungaka as a language of instruction where it was not spoken (Keller 1969:73). The Resident also took issue with this policy, but after negotiations with the Basel Mission allowed its existing schools to continue. No new schools were permitted to be set up using Duala or Mungaka as media of instruction (Stumpf 1979:126). The rise in popularity of English coincided with the decline of the use of these two languages in the areas where they were not spoken. In 1958 the government finally issued the following regulation banning the use of these languages for schooling in favor of English, even where they were the people's own vernacular:

Although the mother tongue of children may be used to assist in introduction, English is to be the medium of instruction in Primary Schools and all text books used are to be in English. Although there is

<sup>53</sup> Stumpf comments that offering one hour of English instruction was enough to attract young people (1979:119).



to be no restriction in the use of Bali and Duala in religious instruction, these languages are not to be given any precedence over other mother tongues. (Keller 1969: 73)

Despite this qualification, this ruling did in fact have an effect on the use of Duala and Mungaka as church languages. Without an institutional site such as schools for the instruction of Duala and Mungaka, the use of these languages declined in churches. The use of songs, catechism and Bible translation in Duala and Mungaka depended on a population that had been taught these languages in school.

#### ***Baptist Mission post-World War I Language Policies***

Carl Bender returned to Cameroon in 1929. Up until his death in 1935, Bender prepared books in Duala that contained Bible stories and lessons concerning Baptist beliefs. He continued to reinforce the use of Duala texts where it was already well established. However, new Baptist personnel arriving at this time did not assume the same attitudes towards the local languages. When noting the shift that took place away from the vernacular, Weber attributes this to pressure from Africans and the competition with other missions:

When the Baptist missionaries returned in the late 1920's, they tried to establish schools using only the vernacular. But the African pressure and competition from other missions was too great, and English-medium schools were gradually established. (Weber 1993:99)

It is important to keep in mind that the schools referred to were all near the coast. While Cameroonian Baptist evangelists had established Baptist churches in the Grassfields as early as 1919, Baptist missionaries did not enter the Grassfields region to establish schools until 1928 (Weber 1993:27). Many of the students came from the Grassfields and did not speak any language indigenous to the area near these Baptist schools. In a map Bender prepared in 1932 locating the Catholic, Basel, and Baptist missions near the coast, eleven of the missions are simply labeled "Grasslands Leute," indicating the measure of ethnic diversity surrounding the coastal plantations.

Paul Gebauer was indicative of Bender's successors in the Baptist Mission. Gebauer was also a German-American immigrant and arrived in Cameroon in November 1931. He worked closely with Bender during his first term and got on well with him, and was even entrusted with Bender's station at Soppo near the coast (Weber 1993:49). However Gebauer did not immediately learn any native Cameroonian languages. Perhaps because he anticipated that he would eventually be working in the interior, Gebauer only learned Pidgin. When Gebauer returned from his first furlough in 1936, he and his wife were assigned to establish the Mbem

mission station, in one of the most isolated parts of the northern Grassfields. There they established a church and school in the typical fashion, but instead of learning Mbem and teaching it in the school, they communicated in Pidgin with the people and taught English in the school.

Until this time the Baptist Mission in Cameroon had been a cooperative affair, supported both by Baptist churches in Germany and by German-speaking Baptist churches in America. The Gebauers' mission in the northern Grassfields was to be a new initiative appointed and financed solely from America. Bender felt that the German Baptist board was not daring and progressive enough in its implementation of New Testament principles for founding indigenous churches and encouraged the Gebauers in this separate work (Weber 1993:53). Their isolation in the northern Grassfields from other German Baptist missionaries and the colonial administration allowed them to experiment with innovations that would have been otherwise difficult to implement.

While en route to Cameroon for the first time in 1931, Paul Gebauer had visited the Achimota School in the Gold Coast. He was impressed by the policies of James Aggrey (vice-principal of Achimota) and the adaptionist principles he saw there. On his return to Cameroon he saw the Mbem mission as an opportunity to apply these principles. There the Gebauers established a church and school, but not in the typical fashion. The major goal was "not to alienate the boys from their village life, and as much as possible to keep them from becoming dependent on the European for the supply of their needs" (Clara Gebauer quoted in Weber 1993:57). Instead of housing the boys together as was typically done in mission boarding schools, they were separated into huts by ethnic groups, allowing them to use their own languages. The instructional approach was very informal, classes were small (20 or less), and the students were not allowed to use European clothes. The curriculum was religious instruction plus English and the three R's. However, in addition the students were encouraged to learn practical skills (the hallmark of the Phelps-Stokes educational philosophy), such as repairing bridges, road making, and farming. The Gebauers never learned to speak Mbem. Since the students in the school came from several ethnic groups, the Gebauers conducted their part of the instruction in Pidgin and English, but Fulani was the *lingua franca* of the church and was also used as a medium for communication among the students (Weber 1993:57;67).

The Gebauers left for furlough in 1940. The following year the school in Mbem was visited in the Gebauers absence by the Resident of the Southern Cameroons, A.E.F. Murray. He filed the following report:

No one can but be very impressed by this school; it is unique in Nigeria and the British Cameroons. There is none of the cant, hypocrisy and make-believe which characterizes almost every Government, N.A. [Native Administration] and mission school in this country, or of that 'superiority complex' which makes the so-called 'scholar' and 'Christian' so odious to his compatriots at home—and to everyone else. The children here, as Mr. Hunt-Cook<sup>54</sup> so aptly writes, are just a happy crowd of boys living a natural and healthy life in perfect harmony with their customary surroundings, at the same time imbibing all that is best from our civilization. There is not one of them, I venture to think, who could not with perfect ease, and without arrogance, take his proper place tomorrow in the home life of his family, and unostentatiously improve it by example. (quoted in Weber 1993:58)

This report says as much about the Resident's condescending attitude towards African education as it does about the Mbem Baptist school. Nevertheless, he recognized the innovative, adaptionist principles represented in the school. The Gebauers did not return to Mbem after their furlough, and in spite of the favorable impressions of the Resident and Educational Officer, the school there was forced to conform to the Government's regulations. This ended the only serious attempt at adaptionist education in Cameroon, which lasted a mere five years.

In 1941 the German Baptist missionaries in Cameroon were interned and sent to Jamaica. The effect of this was that the three remaining Baptist missionaries, all of whom were Americans (Laura Reddig and George and Louise Dunger), assumed responsibility for the entire German Baptist Mission work in Cameroon. George Dunger undertook to reorganize all the schools, making them more self-sufficient (with less funding from external mission sources but relying more on internal Government assistance). He also sought to allow more local, African initiative. Essentially Dunger left the establishment of new schools to the local authorities. The result was rapid growth: in 1940 there were only 5 Baptist schools and 80 students under the Americans' administration; by 1945 there were 21 Baptist schools with 1,650 student and 76 teachers. Increased Government assistance meant that this reorganization was done in cooperation with the Education Officer in order to achieve higher levels of accreditation according to the Education Code. These were all English-medium schools (Weber 1993:80-81). Interestingly, while Weber does not record that Dunger expressed regrets about the lack of vernacular languages in Baptist educational policies, Dunger did regret that he did not personally learn to speak a local language well (besides Pidgin), and that Bender was the last Baptist missionary to master a Cameroonian language.

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<sup>54</sup> A. Hunt-Cook was the Educational Officer for the Cameroons Province.

Here we have evidence concerning the shift in attitudes toward the appropriate languages of the mission and its school. Schools had become the province of the colonial government, but they were still necessary to the missionaries' purposes. Missionaries could no longer open a school without the government's permission, and that required conformity with the Educational Code. So the dilemma was how to prepare people to read and use Christian documents, when everything about the curriculum pointed to the use of English rather than a local African language. The previous "normal" expectation that the local language should be learned and the appropriate texts translated was undermined by the expectation that missionary schooling should pursue a curriculum that could only be supported and taught in English.

Another decision that limited the Baptists' options was that they did not use Pidgin language texts. They used Pidgin orally as a language of preaching and instruction in the church, but the documents such as the Bible and hymnal were in English. The significance of this was that formal schooling assumed the sole mode for the textual formation of Christians. While Pidgin was used to communicate orally in the church, to interpret the documents of the church, one had to learn English, since this was the language of literacy instruction in school.

## **Language Development among the Nso'**

### ***Catholic Mission and Language Development among the Nso'***

These Mill Hill education and language policies played out in interesting ways in the local Catholic mission at Shisong among the Nso'. As mentioned above, Father Michael Moran took over the Shisong Mission from the French Sacred Heart Fathers in 1923. Apparently Moran was not very effective at learning to speak Lamnso', because five years later Rogan criticized him for using Pidgin and not learning Lamnso'.

Fr. Moran was 4 years at Kumbo without learning a single word of the native language of Kumbo [Lamnso']. Pidgin English is, in one sense, a curse. Talking Pidgin English to the women and children and to MOST of the untravelled youths and men of Kumbo is like insisting on Swahili at Nagongera, Lwala, Budama,<sup>55</sup> and other places. Pidgin English is a convenient language for a "Britisher". Catechumens, women and children, at Kumbo and elsewhere have to learn parrot-fashion from the Catechist sufficient Pidgin English to go to confession. Catechism instructions AND examinations in many instances are given by the Catechists in the NATIVE language. . . .

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<sup>55</sup> Local place names in Uganda; Rogan and Biermans had served together in Uganda.

... Monsignor Plissoneau, Pere Roblot, Pere le Brun and other Belgian Fathers, who had been transferred from the Belgian Congo to the Cameroons as soon as the German Fathers had been removed, ALL spoke and used the Kumbo language. Plissoneau made a grammar, a vocabulary, catechisms, translated hymns etc. and left these works at Kumbo for our Fathers! But Plissoneau and these other Fathers were ALL experienced missionaries from Stanleyville and other Stations, —and they were not “British”. . . .<sup>56</sup>

... Pidgin English, mind you, my Lord IS essential EVERYWHERE IN THE CAMEROONS. Even the French Fathers WHO COULD NOT EVEN SPEAK ORDINARY ENGLISH, had to learn Pidgin English FROM THE NATIVES much as we learn Kavirondo or Luganda!<sup>57</sup> BUT where it IS possible to use the language of the country, why on earth not learn it? (emphasis in original, Rogan 1928a)

In Rogan's opinion, too much dependence on Pidgin English led to a superficial understanding of Christianity. In the worst case, as mentioned in this example, the catechists simply taught the people enough Pidgin English words so that they could confess to the priest.

In 1926 Father Moran founded the first Catholic school begun in the Grassfields after World War I. The Shisong school was conducted in English and went to Standard IV (primary school). The first two teachers hired were James Lingong, a native of Nso', and David Omodi, a Nigerian. Both of them had completed Standard IV in Catholic mission schools in Nigeria. The school had 105 pupils enrolled in its first year (Guffler 1988: 26).

In 1932, following a succession of Mill Hill priests assigned to Shisong, Father Ivo Stokman reiterated the same criticism concerning the use of Pidgin. While Pidgin might be adequate for the coast or urban areas such as Bamenda, it was inadequate for catechism instruction among the rural Nso':

For Bansa area however the present rector recommends the Lamnso. Most of the men know broken English sufficiently to understand the questions and answers, but the women certainly do not understand what is taught to them; they have to learn it by heart with great difficulty, but it is never brought home to them. Though broken English has been taught for the past nine years, better knowledge of Christian doctrine might be spread, when doctrine would be taught in their own language, seeing there are now 19 catechumenes in Bansa country alone. (Spiritual Returns, 31 May 1932 quoted in Guffler 1988:33)

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<sup>56</sup> Rogan was known to prefer Dutch to British personnel, especially for pioneer mission work (O'Neil 1991:37).

<sup>57</sup> Languages of wider communication in Uganda.



That same year Father Francis Figl was assigned to the parish at Shisong. Figl established a series of vernacular schools where reading was taught in the first year (called Infants I) along with oral English, and then written English was introduced in the following year (Infants II). Completion of the vernacular school prepared the pupil to enter Standard I of English primary school at Shisong, which was also a boarding school. By 1937 Figl had established twelve vernacular schools attended by about 800 children (Guffler 1988:37). The Shisong school still only went to Standard IV, so if children wanted to complete primary school (Standard VI), they needed to go elsewhere in Cameroon.

In 1940, all those in Cameroon of German, Austrian, and Italian nationality were interned and sent to Jamaica for the duration of World War II. Father Figl was German and one of seven Mill Hill priests who were interned. Following Figl's departure, the remaining Mill Hill staff was not prepared to maintain the vernacular schools and they were discontinued in 1942 (Stumpf 1979:126).<sup>58</sup> From this time to the present, all the Catholic schools in Anglophone Cameroon were English medium schools, with the exception of the experimental PROPELCA schools, which will be mentioned later in the present chapter.

The vernacular schools promoted the growth of the Catholic Church in Nso' and among the surrounding ethnic groups, and they were pedagogically congenial to teachers and children who spoke little English. However, in considering the ideologies and motivations surrounding the Catholic school program, it is important to note that there was an element of coercion in eliciting the attendance of children. The Conference of Bishops of Nigeria and Cameroons endorsed the excommunication of parents who failed to send their children to Catholic schools (Report of Conference... 1937), and Lafon confirms that Father Figl forced Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools "under pain of exclusion from the sacraments" (1988:86). Guffler also cites rivalry with the Basel Mission as a significant motivation for opening so many Catholic vernacular schools and compelling attendance, because the Basel Mission was also establishing schools among the Nso' and their neighbors during this time (1988:37).

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<sup>58</sup> Significantly, in Stumpf's footnote that documents the Catholic replacement of the vernacular schools by English schools, there were only a total of 13 vernacular schools. Twelve of these were started by Figl and ten were among the Nso'.

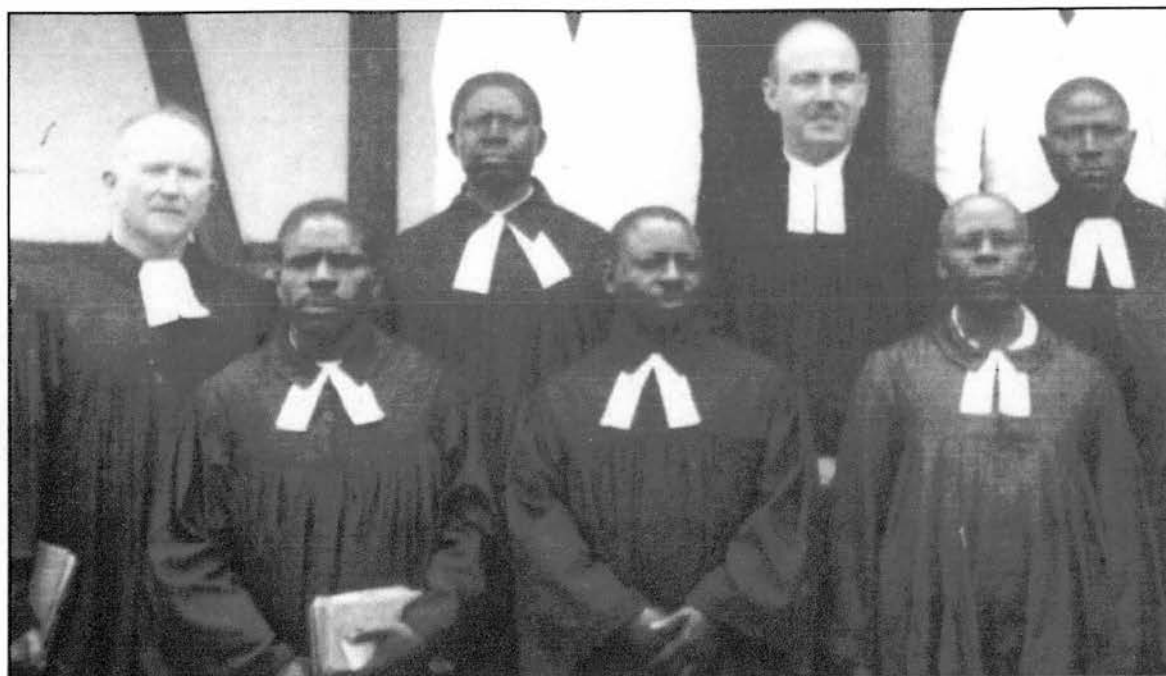
### ***Basel Mission and Language Development among the Nso'***

Following World War I, Bali was the center for Basel Mission theological training in the Grassfields. Young men were recruited from Grassfields schools to Bali for catechist training conducted in Mungaka. The first Cameroonian catechists to graduate were from among the Bali and groups adjacent to the Bali. These were also the first to become ordained after the Basel Mission returned to the Grassfields following World War I, as observed in Figure 3.<sup>59</sup> This is a picture taken on 31 January 1938 of the second such ordination, including Elisa Ndifon (Bali), Daniel Foningong (Wum), and John Mösi (Meta'). John Asili (Meta') and Jacop Shu (Bafut) had been ordained the previous year (Keller 1969:78). Also pictured are Adolf Vielhauer and Karl Weber from Germany. Vielhauer and Ndifon were the principal translators of the Mungaka Bible translation. Mösi was the first evangelist to the Nso'. Weber was the photographer present in the meeting with the Fon of Nso' pictured below. Significantly, although the Basel Mission employed Mungaka as the principal Grassfields language for translating the Bible, catechism, and hymnal, Basel missionaries did not favor Bali ethnicity over other ethnic groups in their selection of leadership. Ndifon is the only Bali among the five recent Cameroonian ordinands pictured.

In 1929 the Fon of Nso' requested that the Basel Mission establish schools in Nso'. Heretofore, the Catholic Mission was the only Christian mission working in Nso'. The first person from the Basel Mission to work among the Nso' was Evangelist John Mösi from Meta', another ethnic group in the Grassfields near Bamenda. In 1930 Mösi started work in Kishong, a village north of Kumbo. Mösi was not yet ordained, so the first baptisms by the Basel Mission occurred in 1932 when the missionaries Rev. and Mrs. Leu were transferred to Kishong to supervise the work in Nso'.

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<sup>59</sup> The captions on the photographs are quoted verbatim from the archival sources.



**Fig. 3. “Ordination in Bali on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1938” [Left to right, front row: Elisa Ndifon, Daniel Foningong, Jacob Shu. Back row: Adolf Vielhauer, John Asili, Karl Weber, John Mösi] (detail from photo by Anonymous Photographer 1938)**

The Basel Mission soon came into conflict with the Fon of Nso' over its Mungaka language policy. At the encouragement of the Catholics, the Fon first forbade the preaching in the Bali language in 1938. According to Keller (1969:64), due to the intervention of Wilhelm Zürcher, they were able to reconcile their differences and the Fon cancelled his decision. A sequence of three photographs from this time period illustrates the language issues that were in the midst of the relationships between the Basel Mission and the Fon of Nso'. Figure 4 depicts Adolf Vielhauer showing the Fon the illustration in the New Testament. This was most likely the newly published (1933) translation in Mungaka. According to P.N. Fai, a former Presbyterian Secretary from Kumbo, the Fon of Nso' drew the implication that the “Bali people were going to take advantage of their language to dominate his tribe” (Fai n.d.). Figure 5 depicts subsequent negotiations between Vielhauer, Zürcher, and the Fon concerning the take over of the Native Authority School in Kumbo. This represented a major accomplishment because it signified the positive relationship they had with the Fon as well as the control of a schooling facility in the center of the Nso' capital. However, it also represented a major concession because the medium of instruction was English, not Mungaka, as the captions for Figures 5 and 6 indicate. It is likely that this concession was intended to allay the concern of the Fon that the Basel Mission use of Mungaka represented a threat to his authority.

The Fon of Nso' again imposed a ban on Mungaka in 1941 (Thomas 2001:167). This posed a difficulty for the Basel Mission catechists who only had Mungaka materials to work from and were accustomed to preaching in Mungaka.

With this conflict the pastor had to bare [sic] the burden of inventing new methods of teaching and revising most of his documents. Non-indigenous pastors consequently faced the difficulties of preaching as they needed efficient translators to translate to the language of the natives. This particular incident had far reaching effects, for even vernacular schools run by the church. By so doing, the church encountered financial stresses as most of the publications had to be translated to english [sic] before their usage. (Fai n.d.)

In commenting on their complete dependence on Mungaka materials during that period, Fai said in an interview, "Thank God we [Nso' catechists] already knew Mungaka so we could translate into Lamnso'."

Opposition to Mungaka instruction soon followed from other tribes in the Grassfields. In his thesis on the history of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Guy Thomas makes the telling comment,

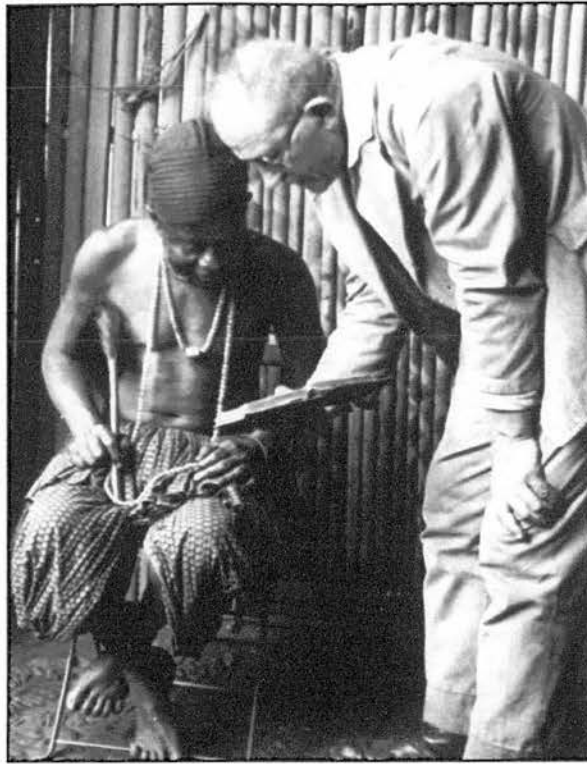
In areas lying outside the sphere of European influence, particularly after the number of Basel missionaries in Cameroon had dropped to three, the rebuttal of Mungaka was fierce. (Thomas 2001:167)

The policy of using Duala and Mungaka as church/school languages was held in place largely by the insistence of the European missionaries. It was convenient for them: it fitted with their historical alliance with the Bali and the schooling centers that they subsequently built there; it allowed them to develop and publish materials in only two languages; it assuaged their ideology that it was important for missionaries to preach the gospel in an African language. However, because the imposition of Duala and Mungaka ran counter to the social, educational, and linguistic desires of Cameroonians, when the missionaries left the policy collapsed.

Vestiges of the former language policy remain in the independent<sup>60</sup> Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Chapter Four describes the current use of the Mungaka Bible translation in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church by a retired Basel Mission catechist.

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<sup>60</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon became independent of the Basel Mission on 13 November 1957 and took over its educational system on 27 November 1966 (Keller 1969:126).



**Fig. 4. "Rev. Vielhauer showing the Banson Chief in Kumbo the pictures in the New Testament." (detail from Weber 1934-38)**



**Fig. 5. "The missionaries Vielhauer and Zürcher during their negotiations with the Fondso (the Chief of Banson) in Kumbo concerning the [Basel Mission] takeover of the Native Authority English-medium school." (detail from Weber 1934-39)**





**Fig. 6. “English medium school in Kumbo (started January 1937) in front of the church.” (detail from Zürcher 1937-38)**

#### ***Baptist Mission Schools and Language Development among the Nso'***

In 1948 the British trusteeship government requested the Baptists to take over a hospital in Kumbo that the government could no longer staff (Kwast 1971:126). The first Baptist church established in Nso' was built on the hospital compound. Heretofore the churches among the Nso' had belonged to the Catholic Mission or Basel Mission. According to Kwast's (1971:127) study of Baptist church growth in West Cameroon, Baptists avoided aggressive evangelism that would be seen as taking members from existing churches. The number of Baptist church members grew because of the influence of the hospital and the response of many Nso' people as yet uncommitted to either the Catholic or Basel Mission churches.

A motto of Carl Bender was, “No church without a school; no school without a church” (Weber 1993:98). This value for schooling endured: as the Baptist churches expanded among the Nso', schools were established alongside of them.<sup>61</sup> However, as mentioned previously, by the 1950's English was well established as the language of schooling; thus, Baptist schools among the Nso' were conducted in English. Consequently, there were no efforts by the Baptists to develop Lamnso' materials for school. In Baptist churches Lamnso' was used orally, or Pidgin where the congregation was multilingual (Weber 1993:107); however, English versions of the Bible were used in church and no Bible translation work into Lamnso' or Pidgin was initiated by the Baptists.

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<sup>61</sup> Bernard, pastor the Bamkov Baptist Church, conveyed this same view: Baptist churches want to establish Baptist schools for their children. The main obstacle that prevents this is the circumstance where a church is too small to support a school.

### ***Lamnso' Language Development by the Church of Christ***

Charles was the first Church of Christ evangelist to work among the Nso'. He is an American who moved to Kumbo in 1981 and still lives there. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Church of Christ congregations are small, with most having no more than fifteen members. As a consequence, the churches have not attempted to establish local formal schools as the other three denominations have. However, the local churches in Bamkov and the Church of Christ office in Kumbo have been active in sponsoring literacy classes in Lamnso' using materials developed in consultation with SIL. Furthermore, the Church of Christ office in Kumbo developed and offers a correspondence course in Lamnso' designed to introduce people to the use the Bible. This course is further described in Chapter Four.

### ***SIL and Lamnso' Language Development***

In 1972 SIL International began a project for the development of Lamnso' that included language analysis, the creation of a linguistically adequate orthography, the development of pedagogical materials for literacy instruction, and the translation of portions of the Bible into Lamnso'. This initial language development work resulted in the publication in Lamnso' of a folklore booklet, a translation of the Gospel of Mark and Acts of the Apostles, and booklet *How to Read and Write Lamnso'*.

Paul Verzekov, a Lamnso' speaker, was the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Bamenda during the early stages of the SIL project and in favor of the Lamnso' Bible translation. He learned to read Lamnso' and used the translation in his personal homilies. In addition, Bishop Verzekov assigned Father Patrick Loshaa, also a Lamnso' speaker, to produce Lamnso' translations for Catholic use. Loshaa translated the Mass, a lectionary of scripture readings for Sunday Mass, various other rites, and a hymnal into Lamnso'. These were produced in small editions, and although they are still in use by priests and catechists, a book of prayers is the only publication translated by Loshaa that is still in print.

Bishop Verzekov was also concerned that seminarians receive some orientation to Cameroonian languages. Newly ordained priests were typically assigned to parishes other than their own language area, and Verzekov invited SIL to give orientation courses to seminarians in language learning principles for Cameroonian languages. Father Christian Tumi<sup>62</sup> was the rector of the Catholic seminary at Bambui and also a Lamnso' speaker. Tumi supported further orientation for

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<sup>62</sup> Subsequently elevated to Cardinal Tumi in 1988.

seminarians, which included Bible translation principles. These periodic courses helped to create a positive climate<sup>63</sup> towards use of indigenous languages among the Catholic churches in the Dioceses of Bamenda and Kumbo.<sup>64</sup>

Following a period of cooperative research with SIL International, in 1979 Cameroonian linguists Maurice Tadadjeu and Etienne Sadembouo published the *General Alphabet for Cameroon Languages* under the auspices of CREA (*Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Anthropologiques*), a Cameroonian government agency (Bird 2001). The result was that all the Lamnso' publications had to be revised and brought in line with the new General Alphabet. SIL produced a revised *How to Read and Write Lamnso'* to introduce the new orthography. Father Loshaa also revised the lectionary and produced a revision of the Mass prayers and rite of baptism.

In 1981 an experimental draft of the entire Lamnso' New Testament was completed by SIL and circulated among all the Lamnso' speaking churches. Previously, it was principally the Catholic Church that had been using Lamnso' Bible translation in its services through its own lectionary. The Protestant churches in Lamnso' had no comparable lectionaries,<sup>65</sup> and individual books of the Bible that had been translated and published as single booklets were not easily integrated into their service usage. With the complete draft of the New Testament in Lamnso' came first opportunity for widespread testing of the translation among all the churches in Nso'. In 1985 a revision committee was organized comprised of at least two pastors or priests from each of the denominations represented. SIL consulted with this committee and the entire New Testament translation was revised over a three-year period. In 1990 the Lamnso' translation of the New Testament was published by the Bible Society of Cameroon, an affiliate of the United Bible Societies. This edition was a printing of 3,000 copies. Subsequent reprintings of 3,000 and 2,000 were made respectively in 1997 and 2001.

SIL also cooperated with the University of Yaounde 1 in the development of an experimental program for literacy instruction in Cameroonian languages in the first three years of primary school, called PROPELCA.<sup>66</sup> The program began in 1981, and Lamnso' was one of two languages used in the first experimental stage (Tadadjeu et

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<sup>63</sup> No contemporary sources were available indicating how Vatican II influenced Verdzekov's positive attitude towards the use of local languages. However, his subsequent language policy statement in his pastoral letter clearly points to the documents of the Second Vatican Council (Verzekov 1995).

<sup>64</sup> In 1982 the Diocese of Kumbo was erected and Bamenda became an archdiocese.

<sup>65</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon uses a diary of scheduled readings, but it publishes the references for the selections, not the texts themselves.

<sup>66</sup> *Projet de Recherche Opérationnelle pour l'Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun*.

al 1991). By 1997 the program had extended to thirteen Cameroonian languages (Tadadjeu 1997). In Nso' the PROPELCA program initially began among Catholic primary schools, but it has subsequently been conducted among various Presbyterian, Baptist and government schools. From interviews with Bamkov primary school managers, the government school was the only one to implement the PROPELCA program among the Bamkov schools. It was implemented for only a few years and was discontinued because of requirements to introduce French instruction into the curriculum. Even though there is little evidence of the direct influence of PROPELCA in Bamkov, its presence in a variety of schools in Nso' over a twenty-year period has served to legitimize Lamnso' as a language of written usage.

#### ***Other Contemporary Publications in Lamnso'***

Other publications that have contributed to the development of written Lamnso' are calendars and diaries. These are popular because they connect the 8-day traditional Nso' week with the 7-day European week. Keeping track of both of these calendar systems is important for scheduling events. The 8-day week is important for tracking market days and *country*<sup>67</sup> *Sundays*. Market days for each town are set for one day in the 8-day cycle, e.g., the main market day for Kumbo is Kaáví (see Figure 7). *Country Sundays* are two days of the 8-day week when people are not allowed to work their fields. In the life of the church, *country Sundays* are often scheduled for events such as visitation, choir practice, doctrine lessons, or catechism classes. On the other hand, the 7-day week is also important for school and church schedules. School classes are not normally held on Saturdays and Sundays, and Sunday is the day when the principal service of the week is held in all the churches. Calendars and diaries which connect the 8-day and 7-day weeks are helpful for scheduling events that need to take into account both systems.

The two local publishers that produce these calendars print a combined total of 4,000 calendars and 1,500 diaries each year. These are the "best sellers" among the materials printed in Lamnso'. Their popularity and utility is evident when those who use European published diaries must fill in by hand for each day the 365 entries that correspond to the 8-day week.

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<sup>67</sup> In this context *country* is local English usage for "traditional" or "indigenous" such as *country medicine* (traditional healing practices), *country doctor* (traditional healer), or *country talk* (local language).

1. Kaáví	(Kumbo market day)
2. Rəávəy	
3. Kiloðvəy	(country Sunday)
4. Nsəərí	
5. Geegee	
6. Ɔgòylùm	(country Sunday)
7. Wáyłùn	
8. Ntə̀rìn	

**Fig. 7. Nso' 8-day week**

#### ***Development and Use of Pidgin Among the Nso'***

Archbishop Paul Verdzekov (1995), in a published pastoral address, notes the history of written language use among the Nso' already documented in this study: that the earliest (German and French) Catholic missionaries used Lamnso'; that Father Moran largely used Pidgin when he assumed responsibility for the mission at Shisong (Kumbo) among the Nso'; that Mgr. Rogan found this language policy inadequate and instituted the use of local languages among Catholic churches in the Grassfields. As a result, a number of translations of catechisms and prayers were undertaken in the Grassfields languages. However, after 1950 the use of local languages for catechesis and liturgy was gradually abandoned due to objections, by missionaries and Cameroonian priests alike, that no one local language was adequate for the Diocese of Bamenda. Local languages were replaced by Pidgin as the language of catechesis and liturgy. Verdzekov's address goes on to establish a policy framework for reestablishing the use of local languages in the Diocese, but the significant point here is that the use of written Pidgin is well established among Nso' Catholics.<sup>68</sup>

In terms of published Pidgin resources, the lectionary, prayers and catechism are all available in Pidgin translations in the Kumbo Catholic bookstore. These were also observed in use in the Bamkov Catholic Church, in addition to English and Lamnso'

<sup>68</sup> Before Father Loshaa began translating into Lamnso', one of his first translations was a Pidgin liturgy of the Stations of the Cross produced in 1973 entitled *Road for Cross*.



translations. In addition, Pidgin is used to disseminate information read by catechists in the Diocese of Kumbo. For example, the following is a paragraph in English excerpted from a Pastoral Letter on Prayer by Paul Verdzekov, Archbishop of Bamenda, to be read in churches on Sunday, 3 October 1982:

I appeal to all Fathers to use every possible means to see to it that all the faithful learn to say these prayers properly. We should unceasingly remind them of this, insisting that they say their prayers slowly, clearly and distinctly, so as to enable those who do not know the prayers to pick them up as soon as possible.

The following is a translation of the same text published by the Diocese of Kumbo:

I de beg strong too say, when we de make Prayer together for Church or for any place, make we no de rush. Make we no talk Prayer like say we de run. Make we talk'am slowly, make we open we mouths fine, and talk the Prayer clearly, for the way whe any man he fit hear fine whatti whe we de talk. Na so whe we go worship God with big honour and respect. And na so whe we go help brothers and sisters whe them no savy these Prayers make them to them catch'em quick quick.

The translation of the letter into Pidgin makes it available to those catechists who would not be able to read it in English. The catechist can then make use of the letter in a service either by reading it verbatim to the congregation or by translating it orally into Lamnso'. However, in order to make use of this Pidgin translation, the catechist must have learned some Pidgin (usually through contact in town) and have had enough schooling to be able to read the English alphabet.

In contrast to the historic Catholic use of the English spelling for writing Pidgin, in 2000 the Bible Society of Cameroon published a Pidgin translation of the New Testament using an alternative orthography. The contrast can be seen in the two versions of the Lord's Prayer. The following is how it appears in the Catholic *Pidgin English Prayer Book*:

Our Father, whe you live for heaven, your name must be holy, make your commandia e come for we, how you want, so e must be for ground like for heaven. Give we chop whe enough for we for this day, and excuse we bad, like we too, we excuse the people whe them do we bad, no lef we go for bad road, but move we for bad thing. Amen.

The new Pidgin translation of the New Testament, *Gud Nyus Fo Ol Pipul*, renders the Lord's Prayer as follows:

Wi Papa weh e dei heven, meik yua neim e get ono. Meik yua rul e kam fo yaa. Meik pipul dem du de ting weh yu wantam fo grong, as dem di du-am fo heven. Giv wi tudei chop weh wi nid-am. Chus wi wi bad as weh wi don chus pipul weh dem du wi bad. No gri meik eni ting trai wi; muv wi fo bad.

The difference in orthographies is evident when the words that appear in both versions are compared, with the spelling of the new translation in brackets: heaven

[heven], name [neim], come [kam], people [pipul], and thing [ting]. The advantage of the new translation is that there is a more consistent sound-symbol correspondence, something that Standard English spelling lacks. The disadvantage of the new translation is that the alternative spelling is confusing for people who have already learned to read English in school; they have to relearn the new sound-symbol correspondences. These texts illustrate an important dimension of the historic Catholic usage of written Pidgin: although Pidgin differs significantly from English, the ability to read Pidgin depends on English literacy instruction provided in schools.

### **Conclusion**

The discussion of whether mission (evangelism) or school ought to be emphasized implies that mission and school have different purposes. Historians describing the early period of missions in Africa often comment that Africans became Christians through schooling, and even the process of becoming literate was closely allied to the conversion process (e.g., Isichei 1995:236). This perspective is telling because it views the program for teaching literacy skills as separate from the purposes for becoming literate. If the point were made that Africans became Christians through attending church, one would suspect that the analysis had missed the point of attending church. This perspective reveals a more recent educational ideology that regards literacy instruction as a neutral activity consisting of techniques for decoding the meaning of letters on the page. Mission schooling started out as part of an evangelistic process that taught people how to become Christians. Schooling was catechesis (quite literally in the Catholic nomenclature).

Within this context of becoming a Christian, it was important for Nso' people to learn how to use the texts of Christianity appropriately. This began with basic literacy instruction, but also included the proper way to understand the texts (catechism, Bible, hymnal, church history) according to particular missionary traditions. Schools were the place where this happened. When schooling became *formal* schooling, i.e., under the jurisdiction of the colonial government, the language and curriculum of schooling changed. The emphasis shifted to standards external to the mission and ethnic community upon which the schooling would be judged. When the missions acceded to the external standards, the capitulation to English as a medium was not far behind.

This is not to say that the Africans themselves did not have a role in demanding English as a medium of instruction. However, it is interesting that when Cameroonians demanded English in the catechumenate, Rogan resisted it, averring that Pidgin was adequate for conveying the truths of Christianity. One can speculate

what would have happened if Rogan had acceded to the Cameroonians' demand for English instruction in the catechesis. The linguistic basis for the Catholic Church would have been English, and the linguistic divide between church and school would not have occurred. Or conversely, one may speculate as to what might have happened if the missions had resisted the government's intervention into schooling, with the missions maintaining their own curricula and language policies. The fact is that after the World War I missions became dependent on the colonial government's subsidy grants and were forced to accede to the colonial government's curriculum and language policies. When they embraced the government's conception of schooling, the translation of texts into local languages became irrelevant. There was no longer an institution that would instruct people to read and properly use such vernacular texts.

This situation persisted for fifty years and no new local languages were developed as written media for church catechesis. The languages that had been developed for literate use prior to World War 1 were perpetuated and extended. Following the War, Carl Bender produced additional aids for Baptist pastors in the Duala language. Similarly, the Basel Mission also continued to produce Mungaka materials, including a church history, and completed the translation of the New Testament in 1933 and the Old Testament in 1961. During the 1930's the Catholics completed and published a Pidgin lectionary. These developments were indicative of a linguistic policy of retrenchment where the mission agencies no longer saw the need or feasibility of developing the remainder of the Cameroonian languages.

Before World War I the activities of Bible translation and literacy instruction were closely tied to Christian missionaries' program of evangelization. The missionaries believed that the local language was worth learning, and that translating key texts into the local language should be part of a larger strategy of communicating the gospel. Furthermore, the missionaries were models of how the Bible was to be used, including language choice. After World War I, however, the evidence shows that it was no longer *normal* for missionaries to learn the local languages. The Catholic and Baptist missionaries increasingly tended to use Pidgin and English in their own activities at a time when they were still the models for language choice. The Basel missionaries used Duala, Mungaka, and English for their activities and accordingly produced texts in these languages. In addition, all the mission organizations were repeatedly and explicitly told by the British colonial administration that the government alone set the standards of curriculum and quality control for the schools, and that literacy instruction was an inappropriate activity outside the school context. Once English became the exclusive language of school,

missions had no means of vernacular literacy instruction, which further undermined the production of additional Bible translation.

This chapter has also argued that when the use of Lamnso' texts reemerged some fifty years later among Nso' churches, the language choices and behavioral patterns modeled by missionaries were no longer significant factors in determining the use of translated texts. The situation in which Lamnso' Bible translation emerged among the Nso' was significantly different from the pre-World War I era in which the previous translations were produced. In the new context, Cameroonians in positions of church leadership who had already acquired education and fluency in English advocated the translation of the Bible into Lamnso'.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Description and Analysis of Sites of Scripture Use**

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter examines sites among the churches in Bamkov where Lamnso' scripture was observed in use. Eight sites are examined, two for each denomination. The Sunday service, on an occasion when the principal church leader (priest or pastor) was present, is the first site described for each church. The second site described is a service or occasion when a layperson was in charge. All the sites were physically located in Bamkov except for two: the rally of the Presbyterian Lamnso' Choir Association occurred in Kumbo, and the Church of Christ office, which distributes correspondence lessons in Lamnso' and English, is located in Kumbo.

In addition to these sites of scripture use, the chapter also considers the primary schools associated with the churches in Bamkov. These are relevant for two reasons. First, none of the churches are sites of literacy instruction, so the school is established as the site where basic literacy skills are learned. As we have seen in the previous chapter, an enduring legacy of the British colonial policy is that literacy instruction is the exclusive prerogative of the school, and in Bamkov this literacy instruction is conducted in English. Second, the school has a role in preparing children for the ways in which the sponsoring denomination expects scripture to be used and understood. The chapter therefore begins with the schools, emphasizing their common relationship to their churches, and then proceeds to describe and analyze the scripture sites in each denomination.

#### ***Contemporary Schooling in Bamkov and Its Relationship to Churches***

Adjacent to the Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Bamkov are primary schools established and conducted by these denominations. The Catholic school is the oldest (founded in 1951), followed by the Baptist (1962) and the Presbyterian (1998). There is also a government primary school in Bamkov. It is the relationship of the Christian schools in Bamkov to their parent institutions and the expectations that each church has for its school that is in focus in this section. Indeed, the common way that Christian schools are referred to locally is as a parent-child relationship: "The church is the mother and the school is the child."

The Christian schools are subject to the same government regulation and inspection as the government school, and children all take the same school leaving exams to certify their completion of primary school. The distinctive feature of the



Christian schools is that they offer religious education from the perspective of their denomination, whereas the government school teaches *moral education*, which is not from any particular confessional standpoint. The curriculum for religious education is devised by each denomination, and each Christian school in Bamkov is subject to the school leaving exams for religion, which are set by the denomination.

The government continues the practice begun in the colonial era of supporting the Christian schools with grant subsidies. These subsidies do not cover all the operational costs, so the Christian schools must charge tuition. The government school does not charge tuition and is the least expensive of the elementary schools in Bamkov. However, in spite of their higher costs, Christian schools continue to attract students, and parents are willing to pay the extra tuition because they value the religious education that their children receive.

The Catholic school in Bamkov is part of a denominational program for evangelism and religious education. According to the rector of a Catholic school in Kumbo, “[The Catholic Church] would not continue to operate schools if it were not for their effectiveness in evangelism.” By *evangelism*<sup>1</sup> he means that the schools are instrumental in keeping children of Catholic families within the Catholic faith.

The close relationship between the Catholic Church and the Catholic school in Bamkov is manifest in a variety of ways. The local parish priest is also the school manager, and the principal of the Bamkov Catholic school reports to him. In addition, all of the teachers are Catholic, although there have been exceptions in the past. The local Catholic church also helps the school in raising funds for its facilities, and the Kumbo Diocese, to which the church belongs, has helped on an occasion in providing cement for a new floor.

According to the principal of the Bamkov Catholic primary school, the school is “oriented towards the moral upbringing of children.” The religious course content is very closely related to the Catholic catechism, the curriculum for the church's classes in religious instruction. The principal difference is that catechism classes are conducted orally, while the school religious instruction is oral and written. Religious instruction is in English, as are all the subjects in the primary school. However, the rule of English-only instruction is relaxed for religion class in the early grades. Instruction may be in Lamnso' in the first two years, but by the third year teachers are expected to be teaching entirely in English.

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<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with Bosch's (1991:415) description of the Catholic use of the term *evangelism* (which refers to extension of the church through catechism and baptism), as opposed to the term *evangelization* (which refers to the mission of spreading the gospel).

The relationship of the school to the church is also evident in the religious instructional materials. The Catholic school is the only one of the schools in Bamkov that uses published denominational texts for religious education. *Our Way to God* is the basic religious education text used by all the Catholic schools in Anglophone Cameroon. In addition, Class 7 (the most advanced class) uses a Catholic text called *Living Life to the Full*.

The school also prepares children for participation in church. The principal conducts a reader's club, which teaches children to be readers in church services and to prepare bidding prayers for the services. It is in this context that he introduces the Lamnso' New Testament, helping children to make the transition from reading English to reading Lamnso'. While the reader's club is technically extracurricular, it shows the overlapping relationships that serve to make the school close to the church.

The Baptist church in Bamkov has a similarly close relationship to its adjacent school. According to Bernard, the Baptist pastor, in principle every Baptist church wants to have a school for its children, but not every Baptist church is large enough to sustain one. According to a Baptist headmaster, "The first intention [of schooling] was to prepare people to read the Bible, not for employment." Parents send their children to the school because they want their children to "be brought up morally" and to "attain salvation." Teachers are normally Baptists and lead daily devotions where children are taught to pray and Bible reading is modeled as a habit. The local pastor periodically conducts a "spiritual emphasis week," during which he teaches special classes in the school. The power of the school to influence children is evident in that Bernard counted six Muslim children attending the Bamkov Baptist school who had become Christians during the spiritual emphasis week.

The Baptist school uses no published text for its religion class. Rather, the teachers are given indications of the material they are to cover by the denomination and then they have an exam for religion at the end of Class 7 common to all Baptist schools. The exam covers topics on the Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Baptist Doctrine and Bible verses that the children are expected to memorize. As in the other primary schools in Bamkov, instruction is in English, but in the first grades the teacher may use pictures or "key words in the vernacular" since the children do not understand English.

A Presbyterian school manager expressed very similar expectations about religious instruction in the Presbyterian elementary school: instruction starts in English and Lamnso' but is entirely in English by Class 2 and by Class 5 the students

should be able to read the Bible and hymns in English. There is no religious education text published by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, but there is a common Presbyterian religious education syllabus and common exam upon completion of Class 7, which is produced by the Presbyterian denomination. Topics include Bible knowledge as well as the organization and history of the PCC. Staff of the Presbyterian school is predominately Presbyterian, but occasionally may be from other Christian denominations or Muslim.

The Presbyterian school in Bamkov opened recently and has encouraged Presbyterian parents whose children are presently attending the government school to enroll them in the new Presbyterian school. One elder of the Presbyterian Church in Bamkov expressed disagreement with this. He does not feel that the advantages of the new Presbyterian school sufficiently worthwhile to take his children out of the government school and pay the extra tuition required in the Presbyterian school.

There is no Islamic primary school in Bamkov, but there is one in a neighboring village and the details concerning it are presented here for comparative purposes. It is similar in several respects to the Christian confessional<sup>2</sup> schools. Parents send their children there so that they will be brought up in the Muslim faith. According to the principal, emphasis is on religious and moral teaching to build character, not just “book knowledge.” Like the other confessional schools, the Islamic school receives subsidies from the government and is subject to the same regulation and inspection by the government.

The Islamic school is more diverse in the composition of its staff and students. Many of its teachers and students are not Muslim, and the principal points to this as evidence that the Islamic school is more tolerant than the other confessional schools. The principal maintains that most Muslim parents send their children to government schools for economic reasons (because government schools do not charge tuition), but those “faithful Muslims who are able” send their children to the Islamic school. Compared to other confessional schools, the Islamic school does not get much direct financial support from the Islamic community through the local mosque, but Muslims do support the school through participation in school fundraising events.

The Islamic school has a religious education syllabus corresponding to its Christian confessional school counterparts and is even inclusive of content concerning the Christian religion. From the material that one Muslim religion teacher showed me, it included tenets of Christian belief as well as Islamic religious

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<sup>2</sup> *Confessional school* is the term that the principal of the Islamic school used to refer to those schools, Christian and Islamic, that are affiliated with a religious tradition (as opposed to government schools).

instruction. In addition, Arabic is taught as a subject to prepare students to read the Qur'an. The school also collectively participates in congregational prayers in the local mosque on Fridays.

Common to each of these descriptions is the school's character for preparing children to participate in its respective confessional tradition and the school's use of the English language as a medium for all subjects, including literacy instruction. It may seem unremarkable that reading is taught in these schools, and given their British colonial history, it may seem incidental that the medium of instruction is English. However, these features of schooling were at one time problematic. As we saw in Chapter Three, the character of schooling was highly contested at an earlier time in the history of Cameroon, when schools were not the only sites of literacy instruction and the missions were avowedly in favor of using African languages in written form. Throughout this chapter and Chapter Five we will highlight how schooling in English continues to influence the ways in which scripture is used.

## **Sites of Scripture Use**

### ***Description of a Sunday Catholic Mass in Bamkov***

This particular Mass was observed and recorded in the Bamkov Catholic Church during the season of Lent.

The service opens with a song while the choir and priest process to the front of the church. The choir leads the first song in English, and the congregation joins in, accompanied by drums and xylophones. There are very few books (hymnals, prayer books, or Bibles) in evidence among the congregation. For the majority, all the songs and prayers are recited from memory. For some parts of the service, members of the choir share hand-written notebooks with the song lyrics. Raphael, the parish priest, opens with a greeting in English. This is followed by the Penitential Rite in Lamnso' where the congregation recites a prayer of confession and the priest follows with a prayer of absolution. The choir then leads the congregation in singing the Gloria in Lamnso'. Finally the priest reads the Opening Prayer, concluding with a sung, "We ask this in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever," and the congregation responds with a sung "Amen."

The Old Testament selection is read in Pidgin by a layman from a lectern at the front. The Old Testament has not yet been translated into Lamnso', so these selections are only available in Pidgin or English. Following a song, the New Testament selection is read by a laywoman in Lamnso'. Another song follows, and then the priest reads the Gospel selection for the day in Lamnso' from the center front

(behind the altar) while all stand. All sit down for the homily in Lamnso', which lasts about fifteen minutes. After the homily, the choir leads the congregation in singing the Nicene Creed. This is followed by a series of Prayers of the Faithful or Bidding Prayers read by various lay men and women. These prayers are read in English or Lamnso', and each followed by a sung response by the congregation in English ("Lord hear our prayer..."). All then recite the Hail Mary in Lamnso' followed by a Concluding Prayer read in English by the priest. The announcements follow in Lamnso'.

Following the announcements in Lamnso', the choir leads the congregation in a series of songs in English and Lamnso' while the congregation processes to place their offering in a basket in the front of the church. This lasts about ten minutes.

The priest commences this section with the Introduction and Preface in English. The choir then leads the congregation in the singing of the Sanctus in Lamnso'. The priest begins the Eucharistic Prayer in Lamnso', pausing after the consecration of the cup (and the ringing of the bell) to allow the choir to lead the congregation in singing the Acclamation in English. The priest continues with the Eucharistic Prayer in Lamnso'. The Communion Rite continues in Lamnso' read by the priest and punctuated by Our Father, another Acclamation, and the Agnes Dei sung in Lamnso'. Finally after a series of songs in English and Lamnso' while people go forward to take communion, followed by a period of silence, the priest ends with a prayer in English. A few announcements by the priest follow in Lamnso'.

The priest concludes with a series of short prayers in English to which the congregation responds in English at each pause with "Amen" and finally "Thanks be to God." The choir leads the congregation in a final song in English.

### ***Language Analysis of a Catholic Mass***

The Mass is broadly divided into four parts: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist, and Concluding Rites. In this section we shall consider each part in turn and the languages used. In the far left column of Table 6, each element of the liturgy is named as given in various interviews and as they appear in an English liturgy of the Mass<sup>3</sup> published in Nigeria and locally available in a Kumbo Catholic bookstore (Igboanyika 1982). In the next column, the language is cited. In some cases where several prayers are given or several songs, more than one language is recorded. This particular Mass was sung, so the items that were sung

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<sup>3</sup> A catechist from Bamkov loaned me a well-used copy of this same prayerbook in order to help me understand the liturgy, so it represents her understanding of the organization of the Mass as well.



are so indicated; the alternative is that the item was read or recited. Most of the items of the liturgy are recited verbatim from a text, either read or from memory. The exceptions are the sermon and announcements, which are performed from notes but not read verbatim.

The focus of this analysis is to consider the interactive relationship between text availability and language choice. The selection of the language of a text to be read or recited is a choice that is dependent on the availability of the texts, and we shall see that availability takes various forms. However, availability is not the only reason for the choices that are made in the Mass. This analysis proposes some of the principles that are operating when choices are made among several available options.

Elements of the Service	Language(s)	Sung	Notes
<u>Introductory Rites</u>			
Song	English	X	
Greeting	English		
Penitential Rite	Lamnso'		
Kyrie	Lamnso'	X	
Gloria			Omitted for Lent
Opening Prayer	English	X	
<u>Liturgy of the Word</u>			
Old Testament Reading	Pidgin		Ex. 20:1-17
Responsorial Psalm/Song	English	X	
New Testament Reading	Lamnso'		1 Cor. 1:22-25
Song	English	X	
Gospel Reading	Lamnso'		Jn. 2:13-25
Homily	Lamnso'		
Nicene Creed	Lamnso'	X	
Prayers of the Faithful	English/Lamnso'		
Hail Mary	Lamnso'		
Concluding Prayer	English		
Announcements (1)	Lamnso'		
Offertory songs	English/Lamnso'	X	
Prayer over the gifts	English		

**Table 6. Language Analysis of a Catholic Mass**

Elements of the Service	Language(s)	Sung	Notes
<u>Liturgy of the Eucharist</u>			
Introduction	English	X	
Preface	English	X	
Sanctus	Lamnso'	X	
Eucharistic Prayer 2	Lamnso'		
Acclamation	English	X	
Prayer continued	Lamnso'		
<u>Communion Rite</u>			
Introduction	Lamnso'		
Our Father	Lamnso'	X	
Prayers	Lamnso'		
Acclamation	Lamnso'	X	
Peace	Lamnso'		
Agnus Dei	Lamnso'	X	
Pre-Communion Prayers	Lamnso'		
Songs	English/Lamnso'	X	
Silence			
Post-communion Prayer	English		
Announcements (2)	Lamnso'		
<u>Concluding rites</u>			
Blessing	English		
Dismissal	English		
Closing song	English	X	

**Table 6—Continued.**

On the question of the availability of scripture texts, the Lamnso' New Testament was published in 1991 and is still available in local Christian bookstores. The Lamnso' Old Testament lectionary was published in successive volumes in the 1980's, but is no longer in print. The Pidgin lectionary has been in print since the 1940's and is still available in bookstores. English translations of the Bible are also widely available. As a result, based on lack of availability, Old Testament lessons are not read in Lamnso' in the Mass, but in Pidgin or English.

There is also an economic dimension to availability. I observed a Sunday Mass at the smaller Catholic mission church in Bamkov, and the Old Testament was read in English. When I inquired why the Pidgin lectionary was not used, the priest explained that the small congregation could not afford a Pidgin lectionary. The Pidgin lectionary is a specialized book and is relatively expensive compared to the

English Bible. This suggests that the local congregation has some responsibility regarding the acquisition of scripture texts, and the congregation's economic means can exercise some influence in the language selection of scripture texts read in the Mass.

Availability of texts also affects the language selection in the liturgy that is read by the priest. Of all the liturgical texts that Fr. Loshaa produced in Lamnso', the only one still in print is a prayerbook. This edition of the prayerbook lacks many of the prefaces, propers and Eucharistic prayers<sup>4</sup> that are available in the published English versions of the Mass. The Vicar General who assists the Bishop of Kumbo has personally translated some of these additional texts into Lamnso', but these translations are not published or widely available. Since no translation of the Mass into Pidgin has been approved, for many of the selections that he reads in the Mass a priest's only recourse is to the English translation.

Availability of liturgical texts also affects the language choice in the congregation's recitation of the liturgy. While the present Lamnso' prayerbook does not have all the texts necessary for the various occasions that a priest says Mass, it does have the necessary responses for the congregation to recite during Mass and morning prayers. Even though the congregation is not reading the liturgy, church members learned the Lamnso' responses with reference to a text. These responses were taught to children in catechism classes before they learned to read. Some of these texts are not strictly speaking liturgical, but have a long tradition behind them. The custom of reciting the Angelus, for example, seems to have been established from the time the German Catholic missionaries first came to Nso' in 1912. This places the present prayerbook, including the responses made by the people during Mass, in a long tradition of learning prayers by heart. Catechists teach children, and adults too, in this fashion.

It is against this historical background of availability of texts to be read and the repertoire of languages for recitation that the language choices in the Catholic Church are made. Several principles appear to be operating as criteria for choosing a particular language among the available range of options. The first general principle is that texts are chosen on the basis of maximum comprehensibility. Judged against this principle, in a service where the participants are homogeneously Lamnso'-speaking, Lamnso' is the best understood, followed by Pidgin and then English. According to this principle, Lamnso' texts are preferred for reading when they are

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., this Lamnso' prayerbook only has Eucharistic prayers II and III of a possible six.

available; when they are not available, however, Pidgin is the next best choice, followed by English.

However, this general principle of an ordering of language by comprehensibility does not account for all the data concerning the choices of texts in the Mass. There are occasions when the evidence suggests that the familiarity of the individuals with reading or writing in Lamnso' influences their choices. For example, in a Mass presided by Cardinal Tumi in Bamkov, the Old Testament lesson was read in Pidgin, the New Testament was read in Lamnso', and Cardinal Tumi read the gospel lesson in Pidgin. He then preached the homily in Lamnso'. When I enquired of others afterwards why Tumi did not read the gospel lesson in Lamnso', the speculation was that since he has lived for many years outside of Nso', he has had little opportunity to practice reading Lamnso', so he chose Pidgin, the next most comprehensible language that he was comfortable reading. In a similar vein, this explains why Bidding Prayers are often read in English: very few people are adept at writing Lamnso', so most of the Bidding Prayers are written in English and either read in English as they are written, or spoken in Lamnso' as they are translated by the author.

Another exception to the general rule favoring the most comprehensible language has to do with the stigma against Pidgin. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Pidgin has never been regarded as acceptable for use in the holiest part of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer. This deprecatory attitude towards Pidgin also applies to the Mass liturgy recited by the congregation in school contexts. On one occasion I accompanied Raphael, the Bamkov parish priest, to attend a Mass on a weekday in a church next to a Catholic school in a nearby village. Some of those attending were Lamnso'-speaking women and some were children released from the school. After some discussion, the priest announced that the scripture lessons, recitation of prayers and sermon would be conducted in Lamnso'. His rationale was that while they might do it in Pidgin for the sake of comprehensibility (Pidgin being the only language that would accommodate the women, the children and me), it was inappropriate to use Pidgin with school children because English was the approved language of school. Since the women would understand English even less than Pidgin, Lamnso' was chosen as the predominant language. The implication here was that Pidgin might be appropriate for its comprehensibility in some contexts where the participants do not all speak Lamnso', but not for school.

This raises another point: the congregation does not choose the language of recitation for itself; it is "cued" by someone else. In the above case, the priest explicitly decided that they would use Lamnso'. In the Sunday service described, the congregation took its cue from the choir's choice of language and musical setting.

For the response following the Bible reading, the cue is the language in which the lesson is read. For example, if the first or second lesson was read in English or Pidgin, the reader ends with, “The word of the Lord,” and the congregation responds with, “Thanks be to God.” Whereas if the lesson was read in Lamnso', the responses following the lesson would be in Lamnso':

Reader: Rən dzə jí Nyùy [The word of the Lord]

Congregation: Beer-i-i waa dzə fo Nyùy Taàta [Thanks be to God]

Following the Sunday Mass described above, I had a chance to debrief with Raphael concerning his language choices for that particular Mass. Since much of the Mass was said in Lamnso' and he had preached in Lamnso', the discussion explored the reasons for resorting to English at all in the Mass. One factor was that certain sung parts depend on the choir, and it may not have those parts in Lamnso', so it sings them in English. Another factor is that certain *propers* (selections appointed for the priest to read on certain days) are only available in English. Additionally, as the priest, he has a certain discretion for selecting the Greeting and Concluding Rites, and these he had said in English because he did not want me to feel left out of the service.

#### ***Description of Morning Prayers in Bamkov***

Morning Prayers are conducted daily at the Catholic Church in Bamkov except for Sundays when Mass is said. A bell is rung at 6:05 a.m. that can be heard throughout the quarter. The service begins at 6:10 a.m. as it is just beginning to get light. Inside the church it is unlit except for one fluorescent light at the front over the lectern. About fifteen women attend, seated towards the front on both sides of the aisle in the large sanctuary which seats 600 at a Sunday morning Mass. I observed this service, and immediately following the service I debriefed with Rachael, the catechist, in order to get her description of the service. Except for one prayer read in English, the service is conducted in Lamnso'.

The women are seated quietly, all facing forward in the darkened church. Without any obvious signal that I could discern, they begin to recite prayers in unison. They recite two “decades” of the rosary. A *decade* is one “Our Father” followed by ten repetitions of “Hail Mary” and a “Glory Be” (Archdiocese of Bamenda 2003). The recitation is done quietly so that it is difficult to distinguish individual words, but it is clear from the intonation and pauses that they are all reciting together. The catechist explained afterward that since this is Thursday, they are contemplating the Mysteries of Light.



According to a pamphlet<sup>5</sup> explaining the rosary, the practitioner is encouraged to contemplate the life of Mary and Jesus while reciting the rosary:

As you say each decade, think about a story in the life of Mary and Jesus. There are 20 stories to think about. Each story is called a "Mystery". On the next pages you will be able to follow the five [sic] "Joyful", Five "Luminous", Five "Sorrowful", and Five "Glorious" mysteries. (Archdiocese of Bamenda 2003)

The following are the five Mysteries of Light (or Luminous Mysteries) contemplated on Thursdays:

1. The Baptism in the Jordan (Mt. 3:13-17)
2. The Wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:1-9)
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (Mk. 1:14-15)
4. The Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-5)
5. The Institution of the Eucharist (Mt. 26:26-29)

Following the recitation of two decades, the women sing a song in Lamnso'. The catechist referred to this song (in English) as, "Everything will pass, but the word of God will not pass." Following the song they recited another three decades of the rosary and then sang another song in Lamnso' referred to as, "I have seen that the world is full of sin."

Following the song the catechist reads the Gospel Reading (Mk. 8:27-33) from the Lamnso' New Testament. She then proceeds to give a "doctrine lesson" in which she "explains" the Gospel (her words). She refers to notes as she speaks. These notes were written on a piece of A4 size paper torn in half. On the reverse side was a handwritten announcement of a funeral Mass. The side on which the lesson notes were written was very dirty, suggesting that paper, no matter how disheveled, was too valuable to discard until it was completely used. Although these notes were in English, the lesson was delivered orally in Lamnso'. The lesson lasted approximately ten minutes, so there is only a loose relation between it and the notes. Nevertheless, the catechist still made the effort to make these notes for herself.<sup>6</sup>

Following the doctrine lesson, they recited a "Glory Be" and the Magnificat in Lamnso'. This was followed by a prayer read in English by one of the women, after which they were finished.

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<sup>5</sup> This pamphlet explaining how to pray the rosary was for sale outside the Bamkov Catholic Church on several successive Sundays concurrent with this research. It cost 100 CFA [about £0.10].

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Five for an analysis of the content of the notes.

**Analysis of Morning Prayers Service**

The service of Morning Prayers is conducted almost entirely in Lamnso' (see Table 7). The texts that they read and recite from are entirely in Lamnso'. The only recourse to English is when the participants themselves *write* something, as in the prayer read in English.

Elements of the Service	Language	Notes
Rosary (2 decades)	Lamnso'	
Song	Lamnso'	
Rosary (3 decades)	Lamnso'	
Song	Lamnso'	
Morning Prayers	Lamnso'	
Gospel Reading	Lamnso'	Mk. 8:27-33
Doctrine lesson	Lamnso'	
Glory be to the Father	Lamnso'	
Magnificat	Lamnso'	
Prepared prayer read	English	
Finish	Lamnso'	

**Table 7. Language Analysis of Catholic Morning Prayers**

The Morning Prayers are characterized by recitation and repetition. When praying the rosary, the Hail Mary is said fifty times, the Our Father five times, and the Glory Be five times. In addition, other prayers are recited from the prayerbook. The poor lighting and lack of materials present during the service were evidence that very little actual reading was done. Nevertheless, these recitations were performed verbatim with reference to a text. The catechist had a Lamnso' prayerbook in her possession (Mengnjo 2000), and she could point to the pages where the prayers were to be found.

The reference by the catechist to contemplating the Mysteries of Light on Thursdays represents a recent innovation in the use of the rosary. In Chapter Five we will discuss further this usage of the rosary as an example of international influences on local literacy practices in Bamkov.

The notes<sup>7</sup> Rachael made for herself suggest that she had read the Gospel passage and prepared for the doctrine lesson. There was no evidence of her use of other written resources in preparing the lesson, which was based on her

<sup>7</sup> The catechist made the notes for her own use and only gave them to me at my request. See Chapter Five for a more extensive discussion of the content and analysis of the catechist's notes.

understanding of the passage through her own catechism training and participation in the church. The disparity between her written notes and her oral presentation of the lesson was striking. She was clearly disadvantaged by her lack of facility in writing English, i.e., she did not draw much content from her notes in her oral presentation. While the oral presentation was largely a re-telling of the passage, the English notes did not represent much of a resource for helping her to accomplish this. What the notes did not show was the fact the catechist was reasonably fluent in oral English. This example of writing demonstrates that her limitation really lay in her ability to write English, and yet English was the only language widely available for writing.

The lack of writing instruction in Lamnso' also explains the one English prayer that was read in the Morning Prayers. If someone is requested to prepare a prayer and if the prayer is composed in written form, then it will be in English. It may be read verbatim in English or it may be translated into Lamnso' as it is spoken, but the predominate language for writing is English.

#### ***Description of a Sunday Presbyterian Service in Bamkov***

The order of service for the PCC is set out in the *Book of Divine Services* (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon n.d.), henceforth referred to as the "Service Book." Each minister has this in the form of a set of bound books with the liturgical directions for services for all occasions. A paperback "pew edition" is available from the local PCC bookstore in Kumbo. According to Philip, the pastor, at some time in the early 1980's the PCC adopted this liturgical format for its services. Previously services were conducted according to a very informal format.

The following description is drawn from a service observed in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church. I had previously attended several services in this church, but prior to the service described I obtained a copy of the Service Book from the local Presbyterian bookstore in Kumbo. This description locates the service I observed in relation to the order of events and liturgical expressions found in the Service Book. With the Service Book in hand, I particularly noted the language choices made by the pastor, readers, choirs, and congregation.

Although anyone could purchase this paperback "pew edition" of the Service Book, the pastor is the only person who uses a copy of it. Everyone else in the congregation is reciting their part from memory. The liturgy is read in English and the congregation recites the responses in English. A few in the congregation have hymnals or Bibles. The liturgical responses given by the congregation are short compared to those read by the leader.

The service begins with the pastor standing behind a large table in the center of the dais. He leads the liturgy by reading the selections that are assigned to him in the Service Book. In addition to the table at the center of the dais, there is a lectern to one side. Those who are assigned to read the Bible selections come forward to read at the lectern.

In the first part of the service, *The Preparation of the People*, all of the liturgical recitation is in English. The pastor begins with the Salutation:

Minister<sup>8</sup>: In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

Minister: The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Congregation: And also with you.

Minister: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

Congregation: Who made heaven and earth.

Following the Salutation, the first hymn is in English. The pastor indicates the hymn by its number in the hymnal and the first line. The church does not provide hymnals. Very few people have hymnals in hand; those who do have brought their own copies. After the hymn, the Invitation and Act of Penance are recited in English, followed by the Prayer of the Day. In each of these liturgical sections there is selection that only the pastor has access to in his version of the Service Book, indicated by being typed entirely in capital letters. For example, following is how the Invitation appears in the pew edition of the Service Book:

### **The Invitation**

Minister: THE INVITATION [text in minister's Service Book]

O come, let us worship and bow down.

Congregation: Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

In preparation for the first scripture reading, the elders place sticks across the entrances so that no one can enter to interrupt the reading.<sup>9</sup> The First Lesson is from the Old Testament (Exodus 16:2-7, 13-15, 31, 35). This portion of the Bible had not yet been published in Lamnso', so it is read from the English Bible. It is read by a lay reader without any oral translation supplied in Lamnso'. Following the lesson, the reader and congregation say in English,

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<sup>8</sup> The Service Book uses the term *minister*, but the people in Bamkov use the term *pastor*. The latter term is used in this thesis for referencing the ordained leader of the Presbyterian Church in Bamkov.

<sup>9</sup> This practice of placing a stick across each entrance during the Bible reading is also employed in the Bamkov Catholic Church.

Reader: This is the word of the Lord

Congregation: Thanks be to God

Following the First Lesson, the sticks are removed from the doors and the Youth Choir (six young women and a young man playing drums) sings a song in English.

The sticks are replaced at the doors and the Second Lesson (1 John 2:24-29) is announced in Lamnso' and in English. The Bible passage is announced in Lamnso' and English but read only in Lamnso' with no English translation provided. A very few follow along reading their own copies of the Lamnso' New Testament. This time the affirmations following the lesson are recited in Lamnso', which are the same as the Catholic formulaic expressions cited earlier in this chapter:

Reader: Rən dzə jí Nyùy [This is the word of the Lord]

Congregation: Beer-iì waa dzə fo Nyùy Taàta [Thanks be to God]

Following the Second Lesson, the sticks are again removed and the Men's Choir (nine men) sings a song in English. After this, the Lamnso' Choir (twelve women and two young men with drums) sings a song in Lamnso'. The sticks are replaced at the doors in preparation for the reading of the Text and the Sermon. The pastor announces the Bible passage in English and Lamnso'. The congregation remains seated while the pastor reads John 6:22-29 in Lamnso'. The pastor recites the Prayer of Illumination<sup>10</sup> in Lamnso' and proceeds to preach in Lamnso' from his sermon notes without any translation in English. The sermon lasts about twenty minutes.

After the sermon the sticks are removed from the doors and a hymn is sung in English. Following the hymn, the Apostle's Creed is said in English.

The next part of the service is referred to in the Service Book as the *Intercession*. It consists of announcements made by an elder and the pastor entirely in Lamnso'. These are followed by another hymn in English while the offering is received. This is followed by the Doxology sung in English and a prayer dedicating the offering in English. Then a series of prayers of intercession are read in English interspersed at pauses by,

Minister: Lord hear our prayer

Congregation: And let our cry come to you.

Finally the Lord's Prayer is said in unison in English.

The third and final part of the service is the *Celebration of the Lord's Supper*. With one exception, the words recited and the songs sung in this part of the service

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<sup>10</sup> From Psalm 19:14, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord."



are entirely in English. The exception was first song sung by the congregation, which was in Lamnso'. It was introduced by Philip as a "song not from the hymnbook." Following this first song, the balance of the communion liturgy is in English. This includes the Preface, Eucharistic Prayer, and Words of Institution read by the pastor from his Service Book. It also includes all the responses by the congregation given from memory.

#### ***Language Analysis of Presbyterian Service***

There are a number of things that may be noted about the language choices and the use of literacy and Bible translation in the Presbyterian service. First, the language choices for published texts used in the service are solely in English or Lamnso'. Unlike in the Catholic service, Pidgin is not an option for the liturgy or the scripture lessons. (An exception is the vestigial use of the Mungaka Bible by a retired catechist described below.) Second, the only Lamnso' text used in the Presbyterian service is the Lamnso' translation of the New Testament. No translation has been made of the Presbyterian Service Book into Lamnso'. This accounts for the fact that English predominates in the liturgy as seen in Table 8. Only specific parts of the English liturgy have been translated orally into Lamnso', such as the *Prayer of Illumination* and the responses after the reading of the scripture lessons in Lamnso', but these are not published in textual form. However, where the reading from the New Testament is called for, the Lamnso' text is chosen over the English one.

The preference for Lamnso' can be seen more clearly in the oral usage in the service that is not connected to the reading or recitation of a text. In instances of oral communication such as the sermon and announcements, the principle of maximum communicability applies and Lamnso' is the language of choice.

#### ***A Variation in the Bible Translation Used in the Presbyterian Service***

In this Presbyterian parish there are six churches served by one pastor, so the pastor cannot be in the Bamkov church every Sunday. When the pastor is absent, the elders are charged with conducting the service, and someone from within the congregation is assigned to preach. On this occasion, Polycarp, a local retired catechist, was assigned to preach at the Sunday morning service in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church.

Elements of the Service	Language	Notes
PREPARATION OF THE PEOPLE		
Salutation	English	
Opening Hymn	English	
Invitation	English	
Act of Penance	English	
Act of Praise		Omitted for Lent
PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD		
First Lesson	English	Exodus 16:2-7, 13-15, 31, 35
Youth Choir	English	
Second Lesson	Lamnso'	1 John 2:24-29
Men's Choir	English	
Lamnso' Choir	Lamnso'	
Sermon		
	Prayer for Illumination	Lamnso'
	Text	Lamnso' John 6:22-29
	Sermon	Lamnso'
	Hymn	English
	Apostle's Creed	English
CYF Dedication of Choir Robes		
	Introduction	Lamnso'/English
	Bible reading	English Ps. 29; 1Cor.3:7-11
	Prayer	English
	Youth Choir	English
Intercession		
	Announcements	Lamnso'
	Offering Hymn	English
	Prayer of Dedication	English
	Prayer of Intercession	Lamnso'
CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER		
Communion		
	Hymn	Lamnso'
	Preface	English
	Eucharistic Prayer	English
	Words of Institution	English
	Invitation	English
	Distribution/Songs	English
Closing		
	Hymn	English
	Prayer	English
Benediction	English	sung response

**Table 8. Language Analysis of the Presbyterian Service**

In this instance, the Text (Luke 17:7-10) was read in English by another layperson, and then Polycarp proceeded with the sermon. What is striking about his language usage is that Polycarp preaches in Lamnso' while using a Bible translation in Mungaka. On a subsequent occasion I observed him taking notes in Mungaka during a service, and another said of him, "He knows Mungaka better than English." In a translated interview (Polycarp speaks very little English), he related how he came to learn Mungaka.

When Polycarp was a young man, he was attending the Basel Mission church in Kumbo. In 1939 he was selected with three others from Bamkov to attend the Catechist Training Institute in Bali. There they had instruction in three languages: Duala for the people of the coast, Mungaka for the Grassfields, and Bamun for the area around Foumban, now the Western Province. Students learned to use the Bible translations in one of these languages according to the geographical area that they came from. So he learned the Mungaka language and became accustomed to using the Bible in Mungaka.

Shortly after his arrival in the seminary, World War II broke out and the German missionaries had to leave British Cameroon. The seminary was moved from Bali to Bafut<sup>11</sup> and Polycarp continued his studies there for the next five years. After completing his studies, he was assigned to Wum, another ethnic group in the Grassfields. There the Fon of Wum assigned him children, which he taught to read and write in Mungaka, using the catechism and the Bible as the curriculum. He was subsequently assigned to twelve different locations in the Grassfields across three different languages (Wum, Limbum, and Lamnso'). He pastored churches in these places, but he was designated as a *catechist*, a term no longer used in the PCC, referring to a non-ordained church worker.

Polycarp is exceptional in two respects. First, he is literate with very little knowledge of English. The other scripture specialists observed in Bamkov learned to read through English schooling. Second, he writes in Mungaka and uses it to prepare his sermon notes. His practice of writing stands out from all the other scripture specialists observed in Bamkov who prepare their lesson or sermon notes in English.

#### **Lamnso' Choir Association**

One domain in the PCC where the use of literacy in Lamnso' has been institutionalized is the Lamnso' Choir Association (LCA). In the PCC there are a

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<sup>11</sup> During World War II the German Basel missionaries had to leave Cameroon. The Bali mission station was vacated and the school was moved to nearby Bafut where a Swiss Basel missionary was in residence.

series of denomination-wide groups that are common to many congregations, most notably the Christian Women's Fellowship (CWF), the Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF), and the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF). These groups have their own leadership, local activities and annual rallies within the PCC. When the LCA is described, it is often explained as one of these groups or “movements” within the church. For example, in the Bamkov Presbyterian church there is a rota posted of duties to be carried out each week, such as clean the church or conduct the Sunday morning processional. The LCA is listed along with the CMF, CWF, and CYF to carry out these weekly duties. However, one major difference between the LCA and these other groups is that the LCA is only located in PCC churches in Nso', while the other groups are denomination-wide.

The LCA was founded in 1978 by Maurice Ma'wo. Ma'wo was a member of the Kumbo Presbyterian Church, the largest Presbyterian church in Nso'. Ma'wo belonged to a church choir that sang songs in the Duala language. There was an association of such Duala choirs in the PCC. As Ma'wo tells it, one day a visiting pastor (who presumably knew Duala) commented on their choir. He said that the music was nice and the voices good, but they weren't pronouncing the words correctly in Duala. Since there was no one in the Kumbo church to interpret the songs from Duala, Ma'wo thought that the choir might be giving the wrong message and might even be saying things that would be “deceiving God's people.”

During this time Ma'wo was active in translating sermons on Sundays into Lamnso' in his own Kumbo church, and he took an interest in a Lamnso' Bible Club that was active in using those Lamnso' New Testament portions that had been newly translated. He also had an opportunity to visit a church in Wimbum that had a choir that sang in the Limbum language. These experiences influenced him to start a choir that sang in Lamnso'.

At first the LCA was only affiliated with the Kumbo church. As the Kumbo church grew and a formed separate churches in other quarters in the town, Lamnso' choirs were also established in the new churches. Eventually Ma'wo was invited to help organize Lamnso' choirs in other PCC churches outside of Kumbo. In 1983, they had the first Lamnso' choir rally with 14 choirs participating. In 1985, they had a second rally in which twenty groups participated. Since then they have had annual rallies.

In 1985 Ma'wo participated in a seminar sponsored by SIL for training people in the use of adult literacy materials. Since that time the LCA has had a component of literacy instruction. Choirs are encouraged to identify someone who can already read

to attend a course in how to teach literacy skills using the primer that is available in Lamnso'. Literacy instruction is encouraged at choir practice for unschooled adults, or those who failed to learn to read in school. While I did not actually see any literacy instruction conducted during the choir practices prior to the rally, the primer material was in evidence. According the annual report for 2002, the Bamkov Lamnso' choir had completed 21 lessons in the primer.

The rally is the high point of the choir year. It is a competition that all the choirs prepare for and the culmination of their work for the year. It includes events where the choir as a group competes in categories of Bible knowledge, song composition and performance. Individuals also compete (representing the group) in categories of dictation and Bible knowledge. They are judged and assigned scores by a panel, which also takes into account each rally event. The panel also takes into account an annual report of all the choir's activities for the preceding year. This year 24 of the 26 registered Lamnso' choirs are present at the rally.

The first event of the day is the Bible Quiz. Through the year each choir has been working through a set of study materials<sup>12</sup> on the Bible. The materials reference many passages of the published Lamnso' New Testament. They also include the recently published translation of the book of Jonah and some portions from the not yet published book of Genesis. Each choir receives a three-page exam with sixty questions written in Lamnso'. They have 80 minutes to complete it, each choir negotiating the exam as a team and eventually turning in one complete entry. There is a serious intensity as each team quietly discusses its answers in Lamnso', huddled together around the person writing their responses so as not to reveal them to another group.

While the choirs are completing their Bible quiz, invited guests are arriving and there follows a service for all to attend. The Lamnso' Choir Rally is a PCC function, so the order of service follows the Service Book, as described earlier. It is mainly in English. After the Bible lessons are read in English, however, they are either spontaneously translated without a text or else the Lamnso' translation is read. The Presbyterial Secretary, the highest-ranking PCC official present, preaches the sermon, which is delivered in English and translated into Lamnso'.

When it comes to the introductions of the invited guests, Pidgin is the language used by the master of ceremonies. Among the guests are those who do not speak

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<sup>12</sup> Study materials were published in 1997, 2000, and 2002. The present edition (Ma'wo 2002) is 42 pages and written entirely in Lamnso', except for the forward written in English, by the Presbyterial Secretary. Each choir buys one copy and shares the material.



English well, either because they are older traditional leaders who have not attended school or because they are from the Francophone<sup>13</sup> area of Cameroon. Throughout the day, English, Pidgin, and Lamnso' are alternately used for announcements, as guests and participants receive their instructions.

After the service and the introductions of the invited guests, the next competitive events were dictation and "know your Bible." One representative from each of the choirs competed in these events. Dictation was an event where the contestants were read a passage of the Bible and expected to write it accurately in Lamnso'. "Know your Bible" was an event where all 24 contestants stood in a semi-circle with their Lamnso' New Testaments held closed in their hands, over their heads. When a Bible passage was announced by chapter and verse, the first person to find the verse and step forward to read it aloud would be declared the winner for that round. This was a boisterous event, especially when the judges had to sort out the winner among two or three contestants who were simultaneously stepping into the circle and reading very loudly.

The choir competition is what the rally is best known for. Each choir performs a song and a skit to go along with it, usually a depiction of some biblical story. These are judged on composition and performance. Choirs are accompanied by various percussion instruments: locally made drums, rattles and clacks. Each performance begins with a song that is choreographed with rhythmic movements by the choir in unison. Then the singing pauses as the story is acted out. Finally the choir resumes and the performance is completed. The story of Ruth and Boaz was a popular theme for skits, possibly because it was recently translated into Lamnso'. This was the story that the Bamkov choir chose to depict.

In addition to being assessed for each of the rally events, the judges also assigned a score to the annual report form completed by the choir group president and signed for accuracy by the pastor and session leader of the local Presbyterian church. According to the 2002 report for the Bamkov Lamnso' Choir, there were 34 members on its roll. There are a number of activities that require reporting that indicate that the choirs have other responsibilities besides Bible study and singing. The choir must conduct literacy instruction and report how many lessons it has covered. It is also expected to organize an International Literacy Day celebration. Furthermore, choir members are expected to be involved in visitation and evangelization; they are required to report on the "number of backsliders your choir

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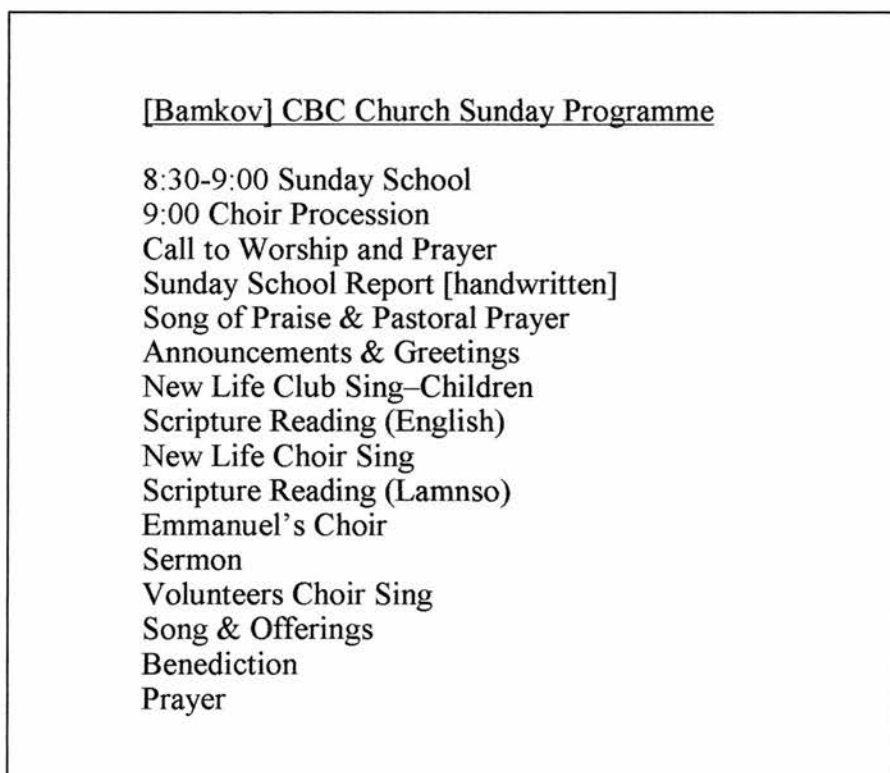
<sup>13</sup> Sitting next to me, the Police Commissioner of Kumbo was in this latter category; he indicated that he preferred Pidgin to English. Some from the Francophone area also speak English as well. However, in Kumbo, Pidgin would have been the most useful language after Lamnso'.

brought back to the church” and “number of sick, poor and handicapped your choir visited for evangelisation.” Interestingly, “Young Muslims” were cited in the report as one of the groups that visited the Bamkov choir.

The LCA has become institutionalized in the PCC. It has already been mentioned how the Lamnso' choir in Bamkov was counted as one of the “movements” in sharing duties with the CWF, CMF, and CYF. At the Presbytery level, the Presbyterian Secretary, the same person who had given the sermon at the rally, endorsed the study materials in a forward. In addition, all the materials published by the LCA have the PCC cited prominently to create a joint identity with the denomination. The LCA members even have their own membership cards modeled after the PCC membership card.

#### ***Description of a Baptist Sunday Service***

The Baptist church in Bamkov uses no published liturgy or order of service as do the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, but there is quite a bit of uniformity in the shape of the Baptist Sunday program from week to week. On the door of the pastor's office in the church there is a printed program outlining the order of the Sunday service (see Figure 8).



**Fig. 8. Posted Program of the Baptist Sunday Service**

Before the service Bernard, the Baptist pastor, meets with Benjamin and another young man to negotiate how they will conduct the service. These young men are youth leaders and are both considering whether they will enter seminary the following year. An order of the morning's service is written out by hand specifying the songs, choir numbers and scripture readings. Announcements to be given are recorded in English in a large bound ledger so that they can be referred to later.

The Sunday School class is taught by Beatrice, a young woman who has recently become a schoolteacher. The class meets at the front of the church. Four men (including the pastor and the appointed deacon) and ten women attend the class. Beatrice teaches the class in Lamnso'. She reads passages aloud from the Lamnso' New Testament, and in one instance calls on Benjamin to read a passage. Only three or four people have Bibles, some in Lamnso', some in English. One man has an English New Testament. There is an opportunity for questions and a young man and an older woman ask questions and Beatrice responds. Benjamin then reads a memory verse (Jn. 13:14) in Lamnso' and the class repeats it. This is repeated several times, and because only a few have Lamnso' translations, this is an oral exercise for most. Benjamin then collects an offering and another man closes in prayer.

The Sunday service begins with the three choirs processing from the back of the church to take their places on benches on either side of the pulpit, and in the first three rows of benches in front of it. The choirs process while singing a song in English, and the pastor and appointed deacon follow them and take their places behind the pulpit. The singing is accompanied by a series of drums and locally made percussion instruments.

The pastor begins by reading several verses from the Psalms (95:6-8) in English:

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord  
our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand. Today if you will hear his voice, harden not  
your heart...

He then prays for a blessing on "the service and the program that we have."

The opening prayer is followed by the Sunday School report in English by Beatrice. The number in attendance (42), the amount of the offering (300 CFA<sup>14</sup>), the memory verse, and a summary of the lesson are all related. She intersperses her oral report in English with her own translation in Lamnso'.

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<sup>14</sup> The Central African franc (CFA) is the monetary unit of Cameroon. Three hundred CFA is about thirty pence (GBP).

Then Benjamin leads three songs sung by the congregation in English following which the appointed deacon announces a special song number to be sung by Benjamin and three young women. This is again sung in English and ends with a brief applause. The appointed deacon then welcomes everyone (in English) and invites visitors to introduce themselves. Five men and two women individually introduce themselves in Lamnso'. I am also recognized and welcomed, although I am well known by some. (The appointed deacon is my landlord.)

Following these introductions, a woman who is the church secretary reads the announcements written in the ledger. They are written in English but she gives them in Lamnso'. Then the appointed deacon announces that Emmanuel's Choir, one of the three choirs, will sing. The choir sings one number from memory and another from written materials, both in English. (This choir is characterized as one that sings in English.)

The appointed deacon announces the Bible reading. Benjamin reads a passage (Eph. 5:21-33) from an English Bible. He ends by saying, "Here ends the reading of God's Word" and the congregation responds, "Thanks be to God." Another woman reads the same passage in Lamnso', followed by a similar formulaic declaration in Lamnso', "These are the words of God." The congregation responds in Lamnso', "Praise be to God" This is followed by two numbers sung by the Mothers' Choir in Lamnso', sung without reference to written materials.

Bernard comes to the pulpit and welcomes everyone in English. The appointed deacon translates into Lamnso' for him. Bernard announces that the project to put a ceiling in the church was recently completed, and the appointed deacon makes a show of turning on the new light and the ceiling fan centered over the pulpit. The congregation applauds. A visiting pastor prays in English from where he is sitting in the congregation, thanking God for the donations that made the ceiling and lights possible. He also prayed for "the pastor and the sermon he will present."

Bernard begins his sermon by alluding to last week's sermon on the topic of the Great Commission. He then proceeds to introduce today's topic, love of husband and wife, because this week is "Family Week." The pastor preaches in English and the appointed deacon translates. The sermon lasts about thirty minutes. Following the sermon, the Volunteers Choir sings two songs in Lamnso'. After this the pastor prays, thanking God for "the message and that we will abide by the message."

Following the sermon, Benjamin leads the congregation in a song in English while people process forward to place their offerings in a basket in the front. When they are finished, the appointed deacon prays over the offering in Lamnso'.

The pastor gives a few final words in Lamnso' and then leads the congregation in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in English. He then leads them in the English recitation of 2 Cor. 13:14 as a benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The congregation sings a song in English as the choirs process out.

**Language Analysis of Baptist Service**

From the analysis in Table 9, the Baptist service appears to be conducted more bilingually than services in the other denominations because of the English translations which were provided. However, much of the English translation was for my benefit. Although the same Bible selection is routinely read in both the English and the Lamnso' versions, Bernard maintained that communication in the service is normally only conducted in Lamnso'. On this occasion, much of the service was conducted in English or in both languages because I was present as a non-Lamnso'-speaking visitor. This highlights the importance felt by churches to make visitors feel welcome, with the result that English or Pidgin is employed in such multilingual situations.

Elements of the Service	Language(s)	Notes
Choir Procession [singing]	English	
Call to Worship and Prayer	English	
Sunday School Report	English & Lamnso'	translated
[Songs by congregation]	English	
[Special song number]	English	
Announcements & Greetings	English & Lamnso'	
Emmanuel's Choir	English	
Scripture Reading	English	Eph. 5:21-33
Scripture Reading	Lamnso'	Eph. 5:21-34
Mothers Choir	Lamnso'	
[Pastor's acknowledgement of donation]	English	
Prayer [anticipating sermon]	English	
Sermon	English & Lamnso'	translated
Prayer [following sermon]	English	
Volunteers Choir	Lamnso'	
Song & Offerings	English	
Prayer [over offering]	Lamnso'	
Announcements	Lamnso'	
Benediction	English	
Choir Procession [singing]	English	

**Table 9. Language Analysis of Baptist Sunday Service**



In contrast to the Catholic and Presbyterian Sunday services, the Baptist service uses no written liturgical materials. The principal texts used in the service are various translations of the Bible. Hymnals are not used by anyone in the service except the choirs. Most people seem to know the songs in both English and Lamnso' from memory, although English hymnals are available for visitors. (I was handed one on an occasion when it was apparent that I did not know the song.)

#### ***A Baptist-led Community Bible Study***

The second Baptist site described is a Bible study conducted regularly on Fridays at the Bamkov community health center. The health center is a part of a primary health care program initiated by the Life Abundant Programme (LAP), a department of the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board. LAP works with communities to set up self sustaining health centers for patients not able or not needing to access hospital care. The health center was set up at the request of the Baptist Church in Bamkov, but a steering committee comprised of Muslims and Christians from various denominations governs the health center. This is part of the LAP philosophy: while it is a Baptist endeavor, it is community-wide in its orientation and targets, especially with respect to its health care provision. To this end, LAP included the Bamkov community in the planning process and conducted a thorough census in 1995 of the entire community (cited in Chapter Two) in order to assess its health care needs.

LAP also has a component of “evangelism and spiritual support.” This component is implemented through “Timothy Groups,” which are Bible discussion and prayer groups organized in cooperation with the local Baptist Church. LAP trains health care workers in how to lead Bible studies, and it provides instructions for how to conduct the discussion, along with a schedule of daily readings. The Bible study program, although led by Baptists, is held in the ostensibly neutral property of the health center in order to demonstrate a community-oriented ethos. Muslims and Christians of all denominations are invited to attend.

In this case, the leader of the Bible study is not a health care worker but Benjamin, the leader of the Bamkov Baptist Church youth group. On this Friday, Bernard accompanied me to visit the Bible study. As we approached the health center, we encounter a woman with a bundle on her head heading in the opposite direction. After conversing briefly with the pastor in Lamnso', the woman hurries away. The pastor explains that this is a Muslim woman who regularly attends the Bible study, and she has hurried off to deliver her load so she could return in time to

attend the study. While waiting for the Bible study participants to arrive, the pastor visits the three patients who happen to be there and prays with each of them.

Eventually eleven women and four men congregate on the covered porch where the Bible study is held. Among the men there was a *mallam*, a young Muslim leader who is also the secretary for the community committee governing the health center. The Muslim woman we encountered earlier has also returned. Later I learned that in addition to Muslims, there were Christians from the Catholic, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches who regularly attended the Bible study. The Church of Christ is the only local Christian denomination that is not represented.

While we wait to begin, Bibles are handed out. Some have brought their own; others are handed a Bible from a stack that someone brought. There are several English translations represented as well as the Lamnso' New Testament.

Benjamin leads the group in a song and then opens in prayer. We sit in a circle; I am next to the pastor and he provides a translation for what is being said. Benjamin calls on someone who has an English version to read a selected passage (Mt. 4:23-25), and then Benjamin reads the same passage from the Lamnso' New Testament. Next, everyone closes their Bibles and recalls in their own words what the passage said. Responses are solicited until all the content was recalled. Then they open their Bibles and review what it actually says. Benjamin uses Lamnso' predominantly to give instructions, and responses are mostly in Lamnso', although a few answer in English.

Next, Benjamin reads the selection aloud in Lamnso' and asks what people think each verse means to them. Following this, he poses a series of questions that are intended to "find the application" in the selection. These included the following questions provided by the LAP guidelines: "[Is there] an example to follow? A promise to claim? A command to obey?"

Finally, Benjamin asks if there are any questions. One man asks in Lamnso' why people should carry their problems to God? (There was no apparent relation of the question to the selected Bible passage. It was not clear to me whether the question was in response to the discussion, or whether it was an open question time.) At this point the pastor speaks up and responds to the question in Lamnso'. He then closes the study with a prayer in Lamnso'.

#### ***Analysis of the Bible Study***

The principal texts used in this Bible study are the various English and Lamnso' Bibles. The participants all examine the same passage together, with their various

versions. The majority of Bibles are in English, but most of the discussion is in Lamnso'. The leader has a card in English to prompt him for the questions to ask. Only a few actually read the passage aloud, but there are nine Bibles distributed among fifteen people, and these were the texts they concentrated on as they sought to answer the questions.

According to the LAP guidelines, this method is recommended for groups in which some are illiterate or poor readers because it only requires one person who can read (the leader). While at least nine people of this group were actively engaging with the text, it is also quite likely that some had difficulty in reading. For example, the Muslim woman mentioned above who was eager to attend the study did not read, nor did she speak up in the discussion. Yet this method made the text and discussion accessible to her because it was largely conducted orally, in Lamnso'.

Another feature of this method is that it focuses on the text and the interpretations that the participants themselves draw from it. No interpretation is formulated ahead of time, as it is when the sermon is delivered in the Sunday service. In this sense the method appears "neutral" because it does not obviously represent a Baptist point of view. This sense of neutrality is reinforced by the location, which is not obviously any denomination's territory. It is only when the topic of inquiry turns from the text to a question not concerning the text ("Why should we carry our problems to God?") that the pastor intervenes to give an opinion from a "specialist's" perspective. However, in another sense the method is quintessentially Baptist, in that it focuses on the apparently straightforward way that the meaning of the text is located in the reader's apprehension of the words.

#### ***The Church of Christ Sunday Service in Bamkov***

The Sunday service described was held in the Taakay Church of Christ, one of two Churches of Christ in Bamkov. The Church of Christ does not have ordained clergy; any man belonging to the church may lead a service. In this case, Brother Cornelius has the most experience and education, and he leads the service. It is held in a small one-room building next to Brother Cornelius' house. Five adults attend the service: Cornelius, his wife and three young men. In addition, a boy of primary school age and four pre-school children are present.

Before the service begins, Brother Cornelius negotiates with the other men regarding who would take responsibility for various parts of the service. There is a blackboard on an easel at the front of the church. It is divided into three columns and filled in with the details from the previous two Sundays. Brother Cornelius erases Columns B and C, leaving only the dates for the previous two Sundays. He then

proceeds to fill in Column B with the details of the service for that day, consulting on the songs they would sing and which men would take responsibility for the Lord's Supper, offering, and final prayer. Brother Cornelius assigns the first prayer and sermon to himself, and he also conducts the singing. When he finishes, the detail of the blackboard appeared as portrayed in Figure 9 (minus the lettered column headings).

The service begins with the first two numbers selected from the hymnal. All but the smallest children had a hymnal in hand. The hymnals are all in English, with the name, stamped in the front, of the particular Church of Christ congregation in the United States that had formerly used them. There is a bit of confusion when Brother Sylvester attempts to name the number of the first song in Lamnso'. (Before the service began, I had requested that Brother Cornelius not translate into English on my behalf, and apparently he passed on the instruction that only Lamnso' was to be used.) The others are confused by the Lamnso' numbers since they were accustomed to using English numbers for naming hymns. Brother Sylvester finally settles on a practice of naming the hymns with both Lamnso' and English numbers.

[A]	[B]	[C]
Date	15-06-03	22-06-03
Song	93	
Song	28	
Prayer	Br. Cornelius	
Song	250	
Lord's Supper	Br. Sylvester	
Song	501	
Giving	Br. Dennis	
Song	215	
Sermon	Br. Cornelius	
Song	224	
Prayer	Br. Dennis	

**Figure 9. Blackboard with Details of Church of Christ Service**

Brother Sylvester introduces each song by singing the first line. The songs are sung *a cappella*, read from the hymnals. All the stanzas of each song are sung in English as they appear in the hymnals. Following the first two songs, Brother Cornelius opens in prayer. He prays in Lamnso' without reference to any notes. Brother Sylvester then leads another song.

The Lord's Supper is introduced by Brother Sylvester with commentary in Lamnso'. He then proceeds to read 1 Cor. 11:23-26 and Acts 20:7 from the Lamnso'

New Testament. (Three adults follow along in Lamnso' New Testaments; two refer to English Bibles.) He then distributes the communion elements. Finally he prays in Lamnso'.

Following another song (in English), Brother Dennis takes charge of the offering. He introduces the subject in Lamnso', and then proceeds to read 1Cor. 16:1-2 and 1Cor. 9:6-7 from the Lamnso' New Testament. He then passes a plate to collect the offering. Another song follows in English

Brother Cornelius begins his sermon by reading a text (1Cor. 13:1-10) from the Lamnso' New Testament. He proceeds to speak about the text in Lamnso', and following this he introduces a second text (Jn. 3:16). He continues his sermon, eventually introducing two more texts (1 Jn. 4:20 and 1 Jn. 4:7-12), both read in Lamnso'. When he finishes, another song is sung in English. Brother Dennis finishes the service with a prayer in Lamnso'.

Following the service, there are a series of announcements and the hymnals are collected. The information on the blackboard for the completed service is erased and the men negotiate the schedule for the next two Sundays and post it on the blackboard. The offering and attendance are recorded in a book and also posted on the blackboard.

A similar use of a blackboard was observed at the other Church of Christ visited in Bamkov. The events that regularly occur (e.g., songs, Lord's Supper, sermon) are listed and the men present at the beginning of the service negotiate the particulars for each service.

#### ***Analysis of Church of Christ Service***

The Church of Christ service is conducted entirely in Lamnso', with the exception of the singing (see Table 10). Cornelius preaches solely from the Lamnso' New Testament, making many references to the text during his sermon, which the other members follow in the Bibles they have in hand. Consequently, there appears to be a high level of comprehension among the participants.

In contrast the singing is entirely in English. Its musical tradition is one of the obvious distinctives of the Church of Christ. On doctrinal principle, the church does not allow the use of instruments or clapping in church services. One consequence of this seems to be that Lamnso' songs have not been integrated into a musical tradition that is appropriate to the Church of Christ. As a result, most of the music is drawn from the English hymnal.



Elements of the Service	Language	Notes
Song	Lamnso'	
Song	English	
Prayer	Lamnso'	
Song	English	
Lord's Supper	Lamnso'	1Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7
Song	English	
Giving	Lamnso'	1Cor. 16:1-2; 1Cor. 9:6-7
Song	English	
Sermon	Lamnso'	1Cor. 13:1-10; Jn 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:20; 1 Jn. 4:7-12
Song	English	
Prayer	Lamnso'	

**Table 10. Language Analysis of Church of Christ Service**

The Church of Christ practice appears the most textually oriented among the Bamkov churches. During the service nearly all the adult participants individually use books. While singing, everyone has a copy of the English hymnal and reads from it. During the Bible reading and sermon, everyone has a Bible open to individually follow the passages which are read aloud. From their use of the blackboard to their use of the Bible and hymnals, the church appears to value a close correspondence between what is written and what is said and done.

#### ***The Church of Christ Office in Kumbo***

The Church of Christ office is in the center of the town of Kumbo, not far from the main market. There is a large banner over the door that says, "Win a free Bible or Lamnso' New Testament." Above the office on the first floor is a large meeting room that serves as a Bible school classroom during the week and a church on Sundays. On entering the office one is met with shelves stacked with a large array of literature. This is the distribution point for the Church of Christ correspondence course.

Inquirers who are interested in the offer of a free Bible can visit the office and they will receive an introductory tract. These tracts and the subsequent lessons are available in English or Lamnso'. The English versions of the lessons are described here so that the reader can understand their content. An excerpted facsimile of the English version of the tract is shown in Figure 10.

# Win a FREE New Testament and a HOLY BIBLE

IF YOU ARE A SERIOUS BIBLE STUDENT, BY FILLING BIBLE LESSONS, YOU  
CAN WIN A FREE NEW TESTAMENT AND A FREE HOLY BIBLE.

Please answer the questions on the back of this paper, and give your name and quarter. The next week return this paper and you will receive the First lesson of the NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES course. Read the lesson and fill the questions. All the answers are found in the lessons. Return Lesson 1 the next week and you will receive this paper back, already marked, along with three new lessons. When you have finished the 13 lessons about the New Testament, you will then receive a FREE NEW TESTAMENT. . .

**Figure 10. Introductory Tract (Front Side)**

Staff members who speak both English and Lamnso' are available at the office to explain the materials to inquirers. When I visited the office I observed a staff member correcting a lesson while the person who had completed the lesson waited. According to Chrysanthus, the office manager, when someone comes in with the introductory form completed (see Figure 11), a staff person records the person's name as having begun the course and the person receives the first lesson along with a scripture portion in English or Lamnso'. If the course is pursued in Lamnso', after completing course, the person receives a Lamnso' New Testament.

The form of the lessons is similar to the questions shown in Figure 11, taken from the reverse side of the introductory tract. The questions guide the student to observe a particular point in a selected passage of scripture, and the answer can often be copied from the passage. Each lesson is marked, and the student receives an explanation of the correct answers for the lesson. Included in the explanation are the citations in the Bible for the correct answer and the lesson number that covered that topic.

PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS AS YOU BELIEVE FROM READING THE VERSES:

1. 2 Timothy 3:16, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*

How much of the scripture in the Bible is the word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

2. John 12:48, Jesus said, *"He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."*

By what law will you be judged on the last day? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Revelation 22: 18-19, *"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city which is described in this book."*

Is it right to add to, or subtract from the Bible? (yes or no) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Galatians 1:9, *"As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed."*

If you do NOT want to be accursed, what should you NOT do? \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR QUARTER \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ MARK GIVEN: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fig. 11. Introductory Tract (Reverse Side)**

Students completing the correspondence course are also required to demonstrate that they can read, to ensure that the answers have not been copied. After completing the lessons and the revision, the student receives a copy of the Lamnso' New Testament. At that point a staff person in the Church of Christ office will also read certain passages of Scripture to the student and invite the person to “give life to Christ—be saved.”

### ***Analysis of Church of Christ Correspondence Materials***

In the example described above, the Church of Christ office is cited as a distribution point for the New Testament Studies course, but it is the materials that are in focus and not the site itself. The correspondence materials are analyzed for their implicit use by the Church of Christ.

The materials distributed at the Church of Christ office are different from the other sites examined so far in that the intended users are not Church of Christ members. The target audience for these materials is members from Christian churches other than the Church of Christ. There are numerous references in the revision material to the student's own experience of being saved, being baptized, and previous church experience. Moreover, the initial tract (Figure 10) introducing the program is explicit in naming the “serious Bible student” as the intended audience.

Another significant difference from the sites previously examined is that the materials are not used in a situation where there is a knowledgeable person present who explains their proper meaning. While there are staff members available at the Church of Christ office who can answer questions, these materials are intended to be taken away and completed elsewhere. The assumption is that all information necessary for a correct interpretation resides in the lessons themselves. In the other denominational sites examined in this study there has always been a knowledgeable person (scripture specialist) present, such as a catechist or pastor, who is responsible to see that the use of the written materials is properly conducted. In this case, the scripture specialist assesses the lesson after it has been completed.

There is another assumption about the users of these materials: the students will be Lamnso' speakers who have sufficient education to be able to negotiate the texts in English or in Lamnso'. If the student chooses the English materials, he or she must have had enough schooling to have learned English and be able to read English fairly fluently. Furthermore, if the person were not already familiar with Protestant terminology, he or she would have to negotiate the special religious usages in English (e.g., “outward sign of an inward grace” or “eternal separation”). This is not to say that these are difficult concepts, but they are specialized usages of English

found in church circumstances, and the successful student must be able to figure these out, either through prior knowledge or from the materials themselves. On the other hand, if the student chooses the Lamnso' materials, he or she must have had enough English-medium education to be literate, and be able to make the transition from reading English to reading Lamnso'. Again, this is not necessarily a difficult transition to make, but there are new characters to learn and tone markings to be interpreted in order to read Lamnso' successfully. The point here is that the Church of Christ correspondence strategy targets literate, churched Lamnso' speakers who are motivated to acquire a free Bible or a Lamnso' New Testament and who can successfully negotiate English or Lamnso' texts on their own (outside of church circumstances and largely without help).

The questions and verses cited on the reverse side of the introductory tract (Figure 11) illustrate some fundamental assumptions concerning the role that the Bible plays in establishing Church of Christ practice. Points One and Two locate the Bible as the words of God and affirm that one's ultimate destiny is judged by those words. Furthermore, Point Three says nothing may be added or subtracted from those words. Finally, anyone who has a different formulation is to be accursed. These are strong words and indicate the seriousness which the Church of Christ members accord to acquiring a correct understanding of the Bible. However, it is not enough simply to be motivated to understand the Bible. Implicitly in these materials (and explicitly in many of its other materials) the Church of Christ communicates its belief that to be "saved" is to experience and practice the Church of Christ's own particular way of being a Christian. The Church of Christ is not content that people should acquire Bible knowledge and free Bibles and continue to attend their own churches. The agenda of its program is to demonstrate the distinctives of the Church of Christ, and conversely, the ways that the other churches are in error.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence examined in this chapter demonstrates that circumstances surrounding each site's scripture use require that those conducting services be bilingual and literate. The audiences and the written materials necessitate the use of English or Pidgin, as well as Lamnso'. In the churches studied in Bamkov, every service negotiates the use of various texts by selecting and reading them, and where the Bible is concerned, preaching or giving a lesson on the passages read. These churches place a priority on comprehensibility so that when possible, texts in Lamnso' are selected and read, and the discourse surrounding these texts is conducted



in Lamnso'. However, several factors keep the services from being conducted entirely in Lamnso'.

The most common reason for the use of texts in languages other than Lamnso' is when a Lamnso' text is not available. Most of the Old Testament has not yet been translated into Lamnso', so Old Testament portions of the Bible are read in Pidgin or English. Published hymnals in Lamnso' are not widely available, so English hymnals are still used in all the churches, along with Lamnso' songs that are learned by heart and sung orally. The lack of written liturgy in Lamnso' affects its use in the Presbyterian and Catholic churches. In the case of the Catholic Church only a limited number of liturgical texts have yet been translated. In the case of the Presbyterian Church, the amount of liturgical material is small and its use in English is accepted.

The multilingualism of the audience is another factor that affects language choice. When there are people in the congregation who do not speak Lamnso' (in Bamkov churches these would be visitors, not residents) parts of the service are conducted in English or Pidgin, and translated into Lamnso'. Those conducting the service must be prepared for this contingency.

The chapter has also shown that the school is an important site for preparing people to use scripture. Since literacy skills and English fluency are only acquired through schooling, a minimal primary education is a requisite for people who conduct services. Furthermore, since schools are affiliated with the churches, the ways in which students learn to use the Bible are in keeping with the customary usage of the sponsoring church.

## Chapter Five

### Scripture Specialists

#### *Introduction*

This chapter considers the people who are responsible for using the Bible in sites of scripture use in each church in Bamkov. It examines what these people say about their responsibilities, and how reading, writing and language proficiency fit into the tasks that they perform. Since there are relatively few people using biblical texts in each church, they are termed *scripture specialists* as a way of designating that they have specialized knowledge and skills not possessed by other members of the congregation. Among those using scripture in each church there are observable degrees of knowledge and skills, and it is therefore possible to differentiate scripture specialists according to the schooling and theological education that they have completed. *Primary scripture specialist* is the designation used for who have primary schooling and no formal theological training; whereas *secondary scripture specialist* denotes those who have completed some secondary schooling and specialized theological training beyond primary school.

These designations are analytic terms that the researcher has applied in relation to the data collected in each church in Bamkov. They are not terms used by anyone in Bamkov. The utility of these categories relates to the analysis of the data, particularly as a means of comparing scripture users across denominations. The terms facilitate comparisons between those who are highly skilled (secondary scripture specialists) and those who are less skilled (primary scripture specialists) in each church, as well as comparisons among the four churches of those who have a similar level of skills. The data for this chapter was primarily gathered through interviews with people who were observed conducting the use of scripture in services.

#### **Overview of Scripture Specialists in Bamkov**

This section gives an overview of the scripture specialists observed among the four denominations in Bamkov: their title in each church, and the literacy, language, and educational competencies that characterize them.

#### *Catholic Scripture Specialists*

There are three Catholic catechists resident in Bamkov and all three fit the designation of primary scripture specialist as defined above. One catechist is assigned to the main village church, another to the smaller mission in Bamkov, the

third to a church in a nearby village. Two of these catechists are men, and one is a woman. All three have some primary school education and can speak some English, but they primarily speak Lamnso' in the carrying out of their responsibilities.

Catechists are responsible for the training of children and new members in the church, as well as conducting church services when the priest was not present. They typically lead morning prayers during weekday services and on occasional Sundays when a priest was not available to say Mass. The services consist of a series of prayers and scripture readings. These prayers are found in the Lamnso' prayer book, but they are also known by heart and recited in unison by everyone present. During weekday services, the catechist reads two lectionary selections from the Bible. On Sundays, others often read the first two selections for the day and the priest reads the gospel selection; when a priest was not present, the catechist reads the gospel. Lamnso' is the preferred language for Bible reading. Since only the New Testament has been translated into Lamnso', the other Bible selections are read from a Pidgin or English translation.

A catechist working in either of the Bamkov Catholic churches has to be able to read Lamnso', Pidgin and some limited English. Lamnso' is necessary in order to use the prayerbook for services, read the assigned lectionary portions, and teach children from the Lamnso' catechism. Pidgin is necessary in order to read the lectionary portions not yet translated into Lamnso' and to use the Diocesan catechism published in Pidgin. The Diocese of Kumbo will also translate into Pidgin occasional pastoral letters from the Pope, Archbishop of Bamenda, or the Bishop of Kumbo. The catechist is expected to read these in a Sunday morning service. Some English proficiency is necessary in order to read the announcements that appear in a weekly parish newssheet.

For the Bamkov Catholic Church, the parish priest is the secondary scripture specialist. Each church in the parish, called a *mission*, has one catechist assigned to it. In Bamkov there are two missions, of a total of twelve missions in the parish. One parish priest is responsible to supervise all twelve catechists and missions distributed over various villages. Consequently the priest is only able to be present in a few of the missions in the parish on any given Sunday.

Compared to the catechist, the priest is much more highly qualified to speak correctly about scripture texts. There is no special training track for catechists. They are people who can read some English, Pidgin and Lamnso' and have absorbed some measure of the correct ways of using scripture through practice. In contrast, the parish priest has had primary and secondary education in Catholic schools plus five

years of seminary training. The medium for all this education is English, which gives him access to specialized texts that only priests are allowed to use. The priest has learned his practice through specialized training institutions that carry the authority of the Catholic Church. Consequently, the priest is the standard against which the catechists' performance of scripture is measured. He models scripture practice when he is present in church and supervises the twelve catechists in the parish to see that they uphold the proper standards for Catholic practice in the parish.

### ***Presbyterian Scripture Specialists***

In the Bamkov Presbyterian Church there is a rota for weekly assignments of readers, liturgists, and preachers drawn from a pool of those experienced in these practices. These are the primary scripture specialists. For each Sunday of the month when the pastor is not present, these men and women take a turn in rotation as reader, liturgist, or preacher. Filling in for the pastor is a common occurrence since there is only one pastor for six Presbyterian churches in this parish. The church secretary is one of those who serve in this rota. Sometimes he preaches, reads scripture, or acts as liturgist, but as church secretary (a position on the board of elders) he is also usually present at services to help with the organization and administration of the church, assisting the pastor when he is there and coordinating things when he is absent.

Pius, the congregational secretary interviewed in this study, describes a succession of various responsibilities he has had at different times that sound very similar to the Catholic catechist: he prepares children for first Holy Communion; he preaches in the pastor's absence; and he records information concerning the contributions and membership of members. Pius has finished primary school, but he has no formal training for his position. On various occasions he has conducted weekday<sup>1</sup> and Sunday services, as well as burial services. However, he is not qualified to conduct services of Holy Communion, marriage, baptism or confirmation.

The pastor is the secondary scripture specialist in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church. According to Patrick,<sup>2</sup> the Presbyterian pastor, his responsibility is to oversee the six churches in the parish, visiting each in turn to preach and to conduct the services that only he is qualified to perform: communion, baptism, and marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Bamkov does not have daily services (as does the Catholic Church), but it is common to have a weekday or Saturday service once a month in preparation for Holy Communion on Sunday.

<sup>2</sup> During the research period, there were two successive pastors at the Bamkov Presbyterian Church; Philip was succeeded by Patrick.

He also inducts the elders into their offices and trains them in their responsibilities. The congregation elects elders from among their members. It is not necessary to be able to read to become an elder, and not all elders are lay preachers. Most commonly the lay preachers are teachers or retired catechists. According to Patrick, academic training is not necessary for lay preachers, but they should read their Bible frequently and know it well.

Patrick described some variation among the six congregations in the parish with respect to their language proficiency: "You have to know the people and their level of English academically." Two other churches in the parish (not the Bamkov church) have five to ten regular attendees from other ethnic groups who were not Lamnso' speakers; consequently Patrick preaches in English or Pidgin in those churches and has someone translate into Lamnso' for him. He uses English by preference if the non-Lamnso' speakers and his interpreter are able to understand it; otherwise he preaches in Pidgin. In the Bamkov Presbyterian Church, all the regular attendees speak Lamnso', so he preaches in Lamnso' unless visitors are present.

Patrick is highly educated, having attended primary and secondary school and four years of seminary in English medium instruction. He owns and uses reference works in English to prepare sermons that the primary scripture specialists cannot afford and do not know how to use. He is responsible for nearly every part of the service that employs texts. He has a special set of service books to conduct the liturgy. He selects the songs to be sung, and if he so chooses, he may set aside the diary-assigned scripture readings and select other scripture texts to be read, and preach from these. Like the Catholic priest, Patrick has prerogatives associated with his position and experience and there are things that he discourages other primary scripture specialists less educated than himself from doing. With respect to the selection of Bible readings, he discourages others from diverging from diary-assigned scripture readings.

### ***Baptist Scripture Specialists***

Since Bernard, the Baptist pastor, is only responsible for one congregation, he is present for Sunday services on a regular basis. I observed no delegation of tasks to primary scripture specialists as in the Catholic and Presbyterian churches. However, there were occasions when a person other than the pastor taught a Sunday School class for adults. One person observed teaching such a class was Beatrice, a young woman who had recently finished a teacher-training program in order to be qualified as a schoolteacher. Formerly she had been the youth leader in the church, and while home from school she would teach Sunday School. She fits the profile of a primary



scripture specialist because she has enough education to use written materials in English and Lamnso', but she has had no formal theological training such as seminary.

On the occasion described in the previous chapter, Beatrice taught a Sunday School class in the Baptist church to 20 women and 6 men. Among the men were the pastor and appointed deacon. The class was taught entirely in Lamnso'. Beatrice used materials produced by the Cameroon Baptist Convention for use in Bible studies or Sunday School. Each lesson had a theme, scripture passage, content organized as introduction, three points and a conclusion, and a memory verse. The particular theme for that day's lesson was entitled "The Humble Life of Jesus" based on the passage John 13:1-17, and the memory verse was John 13:14. The materials were entirely in English. During the church service that followed, Beatrice reported in Lamnso' on the Sunday School class to the entire congregation. She described the theme and gave a brief summary of the lesson; she also gave the memory verse, amount of the offering and the number in attendance.

The circumstances surrounding the lesson presented by Beatrice contrast with those of the Catholic and Presbyterian primary scripture specialists because the pastor was present for the presentation. This suggests that rather than delegating responsibility to the presenter, the pastor was sharing responsibility under his supervision. This was also the case in the Bible study conducted by Benjamin in the health center described in Chapter Four. In each case the presence of the pastor did not automatically indicate that he should be the one to conduct the session, as was the case in the Catholic and Presbyterian services.

In the Bamkov Baptist Church, the pastor is the secondary specialist. Bernard described his activities in relation to the various services and instructional events for which he is responsible. He preaches at Sunday services as well as at the weekly Saturday Christian Meetings, the latter attended principally by adult members of the church. He also holds classes for inquirers in preparation for membership in the church. At various times during the year, such as during Holy Week, he will teach a series of Bible classes for church members. He also described sessions that he has given to orient newly elected deacons for their leadership roles. In addition to preaching and teaching, he conducts baptisms, weddings, and funeral and memorial services.

#### ***Church of Christ Scripture Specialists***

As already described in Chapter Four, both of the Churches of Christ in Bamkov are small (with six and twelve members respectively), and in neither church is

anyone formally named as a pastor. However, in both churches there is one man who consistently preaches the sermon in Sunday service, and both of these men are Bible school graduates. They fill the role of secondary scripture specialist, and since both normally are in attendance in their Sunday services, no other primary scripture specialists were identified. When I asked Chrysanthus, one of the two leaders, what happened on the occasions when he was away over a Sunday, he replied that on a recent occasion one man had taken a tract and read it in lieu of a sermon.

These men lead in their churches by virtue of their education and experience, not by any appointment by the church. Yet the trappings of a secondary specialist are evident: Cornelius, the other leader, showed me his personal library, which was a bookcase of books in English. He also has his Bible school certificate displayed on the wall of his house. Both of these men also have tacit recognition of their competence in Bible knowledge because they were selected by the Church of Christ office in Kumbo for participation in the Lamnso' Old Testament translation project.

### **Themes from the Data: Practices of Scripture Specialists**

This is the first of three sections that discuss themes found in the data regarding scripture specialists. In this case a *theme* is understood to mean a feature relevant to the research that is compared and interpreted to be similar or contrastive in two or more traditions. Two themes focusing on *practices* are discussed in this section: the ways the scripture specialists prepare for the lesson or sermons that they present; the ways that scripture specialist use writing with two examples of writing by scripture specialists that were collected.

#### ***Preparation of Lessons and Sermons***

Every scripture specialist prepares in some way for the lessons or sermons that they deliver. The preparation is a discrete stage in the presentation of a lesson or sermon since it is conducted ahead of time. Obviously preparation is also closely connected to the performance itself and to expectations of what it means to give a lesson or sermon in a given church. In this section the competencies of scripture specialists are examined in relation to the ways that they prepare for their presentations.

#### ***Catholic Preparation of the Homily***

In the Catholic services, the catechist gives *doctrine lessons* and the priest gives *homilies*. In concept, a homily is similar to the doctrine lesson in that it is an exposition of a scripture text. However, Raphael, the Bamkov parish priest, distinguishes his preparation and delivery of homilies from those of catechists.

Catechists do not have reference books. They “read the selection and share what they think.” In contrast, the priest has textual resources such as a Bible dictionary and commentaries for determining the interpretation of a passage, and he also has the training to use them. He characterizes some catechists as “not quite trained and not quite literate.” He advises them not to give a doctrine lesson at Sunday services (when he is absent) because there were many people<sup>3</sup> in the congregation, and some of them might know more than the catechist so that it would be “embarrassing” for the catechist. Rather, he advises that they just read the gospel passage and allow people to meditate on it.

In order to prepare a homily, which is delivered in Lamnso', Raphael reads the assigned Bible selections in both English and Lamnso'. He normally preaches in Lamnso' because it is the language that members of his parish understand best. However in his preparation for his homily, he uses predominantly English texts. He starts by reading the three passages designated by the lectionary in one or more English versions of the Bible. He then chooses a theme and develops it. He sometimes consults a commentary on the Bible, also in English, to better understand the meaning of the texts. He has a large bookcase of theological books that he can consult, but he found that they do not always “suit our culture” because they are “very western.” However, he finds commentaries by the theologian William Barclay<sup>4</sup> helpful in determining the “correct interpretation” of a passage. He also consults the Lamnso' version of the New Testament, but even though he is a native speaker of Lamnso', Raphael does not begin his homily preparation with the Lamnso' translation.

On Sundays there are three Bible texts assigned to be read (as in the Sunday Mass described in Chapter Four). When the priest is present, it is his responsibility to read the most important of the three, the gospel text. Raphael reads it in Lamnso' and then preaches a homily in Lamnso' on one or all of the Bible texts. When asked what parts of the Bible he was most attracted to, he replied that in doctrine he is attracted to the gospel of John, but he is not free to preach on passages from John whenever he wants to. When a reading is assigned by the lectionary for a service, he has to preach on that particular reading.

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<sup>3</sup> The main Catholic Church in Bamkov has more than 500 people in attendance on Sundays.

<sup>4</sup> William Barclay authored a popular set of commentaries on the New Testament in *The Daily Study Bible* series (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew).

### ***Presbyterian Preparation of the Sermon***

Pius, the Presbyterian church secretary, preaches when it was his turn in the rota. As mentioned in the description of the Sunday Presbyterian service in Chapter Four, the PCC uses a diary similar to the Catholic lectionary. In order to prepare for preaching a sermon, Pius reads the scripture lessons for that day. He uses both the translations in English and Lamnso' "to make sure what I tell people is from the Bible. I can read a word in English, not know it, and get [the] meaning from [the] Lamnso' [New Testament]."

One Saturday I observed the Patrick in his office preparing a sermon for the next day. On his desk he had his written notes and three different English translations of the Bible and the Lamnso' New Testament open to the texts he would be using. He also has a bookcase of theological books that he could consult. To prepare a sermon, he reads the texts in various versions and selects a theme that he will develop. The PCC publishes a diary of assigned Bible readings for each Sunday, but he is free to choose other readings<sup>5</sup> if he wants to. He writes several drafts, finally summarizing it into a sermon. He learned to preach in seminary and while there he practiced preaching in English and Pidgin, depending on the level of the congregation. He was also trained to use the PCC liturgy service books in English. He has received no special instruction for using Lamnso' in church.

### ***Baptist Preparation of the Sermon***

During the week, the Baptist pastor spends time preparing for services, sometimes preparing for several events at the same time. For example, when I interviewed Bernard one Saturday, he said that he was preparing for the next day's sermon as well as the following Sunday's. By this he meant that he had selected topics for these sermons and was accumulating material for both of them. He carries a small notebook during the day and writes down ideas that he will use later when preparing the message. When it comes time to develop the sermon, Bernard looks for passages in the Bible on his topic:

Sometimes you want to preach encouragement messages, then you will go to the Bible, you will look at passages that talk about encouragement. And then if you want to preach on, let's say you want to preach on thanksgiving. You want Christians to see what God is doing in their lives, and to give thanks to God and to thank God, then there are also passages that talk about thanksgiving, then you go those sections. You pick out your message which you want to preach.

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<sup>5</sup> However, he discourages lay preachers from diverging from the assigned readings.

This approach to sermon development is more topic driven than the lectionary approach used by the Catholic priest and the Presbyterian pastor. Bernard thinks of a theme or topic that he wants to convey and finds passages related to that theme. In contrast, the lectionary approach provides the passages and requires the preacher to relate them to a topic or theme. However, both approaches require certain biblical knowledge in order to relate disparate passages to a theme.

Bernard chooses the scripture passage to be read preceding the sermon in order to fit the topic he is going to preach on. In the service, this is read in English and then again in Lamnso'. If the text is a passage from the Old Testament, which has not yet been translated into Lamnso', he translates it himself because not everyone can translate well. On one occasion, in addition to the passage (Romans 12:2) read by someone else in the service, I observed Bernard read another scripture passage (II Cor. 5:17) in English at the beginning of his sermon, and he referred to both of these texts in his sermon.

As a primary scripture specialist, Beatrice does not prepare sermons. However, the Sunday School materials she uses resemble the form and organization that Bernard uses for sermon preparation. The lesson selects one particular passage of scripture and uses the format of introduction, three points and a conclusion. These materials were produced by the Baptist denomination and are in English. In contrast to the other three denominations, there is no evidence that the Baptist denomination has produced any written materials in Lamnso'.

#### ***Church of Christ Preparation of the Sermon***

Regarding his own sermon preparation, Chrysanthus, the leader of the Rookay Church of Christ, described a process based on his familiarity with the Bible:

I have many scriptures in my head. The only difficulty is in choosing a topic. Once I have a topic, the scriptures come to me. I also use a concordance and a Thompson Chain Reference [Bible]<sup>6</sup> to find other scriptures. The important thing is to choose a topic that will help the church.

In Bible school he learned how to make a sermon outline with three or four points and scripture references for each point.

#### ***Writing by Scripture Specialists***

All the scripture specialists in Bamkov were literate and were observed writing to perform various clerical tasks such as writing announcements or attendance lists.

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<sup>6</sup> A brand of Bible that provides topical cross-references.



These were always written in English. In two instances I was able to collect writing produced by scripture specialists in preparation for services.

### ***An Example of Writing for the Preparation of a Catholic "Doctrine Lesson"***

In comparing the catechists' uses of Pidgin and English, they are expected to read Pidgin but to write in English. The expectation is that anyone who can speak Pidgin can also read it, if the person has also learned to read some English. However, the intentional<sup>7</sup> writing of Pidgin is a specialized skill practiced by very few people. It is not learned in school; in fact, use of Pidgin is forbidden in school. One would have to make a concerted effort to learn how to write Pidgin, as it was represented in the example from a pastoral letter in Chapter Three. These translated pastoral letters produced by the Diocese of Kumbo were the only source of new texts in Pidgin that was observed in use in Bamkov. When catechists were observed writing in Bamkov, it was in English, albeit influenced by Pidgin.

The catechist is required to do various writing tasks. Rachael, the catechist of the Bamkov Catholic Church, records names and personal information so that the parish priest can issue membership cards and other certificates such as Baptism and first Holy Communion. She also prepares announcements to be read in church after the pattern of past announcements. These are limited tasks that mainly involve copying information according to a given model of past usage. However, the notes for the doctrine lesson shown below represent an attempt to use writing for more than just copying. In this instance Rachael was reading in Lamnso' and writing in English in order to give an oral presentation of the lesson in Lamnso'.

On *country Sundays*, Rachael gives a lesson in *doctrine* during the morning prayers service. This is an oral exposition of the scripture text assigned for that day. She gives this in Lamnso'. Such was the description of the doctrine lesson in the Morning Prayers service described in Chapter Four. On that occasion, Rachael took notes in preparation to give a doctrine lesson on the gospel reading for the day (Mk. 8:27-33). These notes are reproduced verbatim (as written by Rachael) as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> Wolf (2001) characterizes the relation of Pidgin to Cameroonian English as a continuum. Some people write English influenced by Pidgin, but only the Catholic Church intentionally writes communiqués at the Pidgin end of the continuum.

We heard that Jesus left with his children<sup>8</sup> to go to Filipi<sup>9</sup>. When going he asked them, whom he was as people were calling him.

Some call him, Joon the Baptise, Elija, prophets for long ago. Too he asked them whom he was

Pita said he was the saveior. Mfeen wo nyuy ii kaan.

Jesus told them not to tell any one.

He told them about what was going to happen to him. That he will sofer: and they kill him. They heard and did not know what he means. Then Pita ask him. He said Pita you are Satan. You are thinking like a man and not like God. What did Jesus mean about what he said to Pita.

**Fig. 12. Notes Written for a Catholic Doctrine Lesson**

Notice that these notes are predominately in English. Although the grammatical usage is not Standard English, nearly all the words are written as English words, although a few are misspelled. One exception is the spelling of names: Filipi, Joon, Elija, Pita, Jesus, and Satan all appear as they are spelled in the Lamnso' New Testament translation. The evidence suggests that the catechist took notes while reading the Lamnso' New Testament but composed them in English. This is further borne out by the Lamnso' words following the misspelled word "saveior" [savior]: *Mfeen wo nyuy ii kaan*. These words are her attempt to reproduce in an English orthography what appeared in the Lamnso' New Testament as 'Mfëär wo Nyùy-ii kà'àn', which is the paraphrastic Lamnso' translation for *messiah* (literally meaning "Redeemer/Deliverer which God-past-tense promised").

Rachael's efforts to write even this short phrase in Lamnso' are instructive. By writing entirely in an English orthography, she missed the quality of the long vowel 'əə' which is distinguished from the long vowel 'ee'; the hyphenated -ii which indicates past tense; and the apostrophe which indicates a glottal stop between the vowels in 'kà'àn'. She also failed to represent tone at all. If Rachael was only making notes for herself for the doctrine lesson, as the evidence suggests, then the representation of this short Lamnso' phrase would be adequate in its context. However, if the catechist wanted to write more extensively in Lamnso', the English orthography would prove increasingly inadequate because it does not contain the characters necessary for conveying an adequate linguistic representation. This evidence suggests that Rachael has not acquired the skills for writing Lamnso' in the orthography as it appears in the New Testament.

<sup>8</sup> Lamnso' phrase is literally "children of work" meaning *apprentices* or *disciples*.

<sup>9</sup> Caesarea Philippi.

### ***Examples of Writing for the Preparation of Baptist Sermons***

Two examples of writing by Bernard, the Baptist pastor, were observed. One was a program for a memorial service that he wrote by hand on a scrap of paper. This program was essentially a list written for his own use, as in the case of the lesson notes written by the catechist described above. It was a sort of mnemonic device for organizing the elements (songs, prayers, and interventions by various people) of the event. This use of writing was temporary and disposable and was only intended for use in the event itself.

In contrast, another example observed was a notebook of sermon outlines intended to be kept and used again. When Bernard prepares a sermon, it takes the form of an outline with an introduction, three or four points and a conclusion. He writes these notes in English but normally delivers them in Lamnso'.<sup>10</sup> After the service he saves these sermon outlines and uses them to preach a similar sermon on another occasion. In this case, Bernard showed me a notebook full of these outlines that he had produced. Each outline listed a scripture text to be read, a theme, an introduction, two to five points with many scriptures cited, and a conclusion. He also showed me a book of lessons on the theme of "biblical giving" produced by the Cameroon Baptist Convention that was striking in its similarity to the sermon outlines that he had produced in his notebook (Cameroon Baptist Convention n.d.). In a sense, Bernard had become an author of his own book of sermons in a form that was much more durable than either the catechist's lesson notes or his own scribbled service program.

The fact that this notebook of sermon outlines was written in English attests to the powerful norm that all writing is done in English. Bernard is a member of the committee that is translating the Lamnso' Old Testament and so has considerable experience in working with Lamnso' texts. Yet when it came to producing material that he would use to deliver sermons in Lamnso', he resorted to his repertoire of English.

### **Themes from the data: Interpretive Context**

Three themes emerged from the data regarding what constitutes an appropriate context for interpreting texts. The first explores the complex role of comprehension in the language choices that scripture specialists make. The second considers the notion of the Bible as "text concept" as a foundation for inter-church cooperation.

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<sup>10</sup> Except when someone who does not speak Lamnso' visits the service, in which case, he would deliver the sermon in English with a translation into Lamnso'.

The third considers two examples of international influences on the local interpretive context for using scripture.

### ***Comprehension in Relation to Language Choice***

There are variations in expectations regarding whether the texts themselves must be understood versus whether a general understanding of the activity in which the text is embedded is acceptable. For certain Catholic rites, it is acceptable (although not necessarily desirable) to understand what is happening without understanding the words used.

According to Raphael, the parish priest, an important role of the catechist is to prepare children to understand what was happening in church, even if they do not understand all the language used in the services. In this regard, Raphael's explanation of confession and absolution is instructive. After observing a catechist prepare young children for their first confession, I asked Raphael how other priests, who do not speak Lamnso', handle hearing confessions of young children who only speak Lamnso'. His response was that the priest is a "physical tool" that needs to be present but does not need to understand the child's words for the confession to be effective. The interpretation here is not that comprehension is unimportant. Rather, comprehension is important in the catechism class, which is why it is taught in the children's language; this way, they will understand the meaning of the confession event even if they do not understand everything that the priest says. Understanding the language of the rites themselves is desirable but not necessary, and sometimes it is not possible when the priest does not speak the language of his local parish.<sup>11</sup>

Even if it is not necessary to comprehend everything said in a service, comprehension is a factor in language choices. Scripture specialists still have to make choices among Lamnso', Pidgin, and English options, and these choices are often influenced by the languages comprehended (or not comprehended) by the *audience*. The importance of comprehension is manifest in the scripture specialist's repertoire of languages necessary to accommodate visitors. Thus, Pius contends that it is necessary to know English in order to preach in the Presbyterian Church. He gave two reasons for this. First, he made the link between knowing English, being able to read, and preaching: "Nobody can read when he doesn't know English. . . . He is preaching what he reads from the Bible, and no one is preaching who doesn't know how to read." Furthermore, a preacher must be prepared to preach in English if visitors enter the service who do not speak Lamnso'. Characteristically, the person

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter Two noted that 31 of the 64 priests assigned to the Diocese of Kumbo are native speakers of Lamnso'.

delivering the sermon preaches in Lamnso' to a Lamnso'-speaking congregation. However, the preacher switches from Lamnso' to English to accommodate visitors, and someone else will translate orally into Lamnso' for the benefit of those in the congregation who do not speak English. The reverse was only observed once, when the sermon was delivered in Lamnso' and the translation provided in English.<sup>12</sup> The assumption here seems to be that normally the one preaching knows more English than the one translating. This interpretation is borne out by a comment by Pius that sometimes the preacher "will break a[n] [English] word into Pidgin to help the one translating into Lamnso'."

For Bernard comprehension is important because Christians should not to "go against Scripture" in any of the activities they engage in or the decisions they make. The pastor's role is to teach people scripture so that, in his words, "they will know the right thing." In this regard Bernard's response was telling when I asked him if it was possible for an entire congregation to go against Scripture:

It can easily happen that the majority can carry the vote wrongly. That sometimes happens. Since we are following the congregational system of church government, we are following it with scripture, so that anything we want to do, first of all we need to read the scripture to people. Maybe it is a decision we want to take. First of all, we first need to read the scripture to people. And then we explain to them, and then they know the right thing; they know the wrong thing. When they know the right and the wrong, when they want to take a majority vote, they will take it now basing on the scripture. Because sometimes if we don't teach, if we don't help the people know the truth, they can easily go the wrong way.

Thus, in Bernard's view, practices or decisions that do not follow the Bible are likely to be wrong. In this context, instruction that is "extra biblical" is suspect because it does not explicitly take the Bible into account.

### ***Recitation vs. Reading***

The Catholic and Presbyterian churches are accustomed to recitation in their services, while the Baptist and Churches of Christ do almost no recitation except for the Lord's Prayer. Recitation does not necessarily imply lack of comprehension, but it does allow people to participate without understanding what they are reciting. Furthermore, recitation allows people to participate without requiring them to be able to read. This section explores the extent that recitation is taught and practiced instead of reading.

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<sup>12</sup> This exception was observed at a special World Day of Prayer service when a woman preached in Lamnso' and another woman translated the sermon into English.



### ***Catholic Recitation***

The Bamkov catechists teach children in weekly classes using catechism books in Lamnso' and Pidgin published by the Diocese of Kumbo. The catechism references the Bible extensively and is the basis for interpreting scriptural texts correctly. The children usually begin the classes at six years of age and are not expected to know how to read. The instruction is in Lamnso', but the children are also taught to recite extensive amounts of Pidgin and English. They learn to recite all the prayers required of the congregation for Morning Prayers, Evening Prayers, and Mass, as well as prayers for before and after meals. They are also taught to recite the Rosary. These prayers are taught in Lamnso', Pidgin and English. A priest or another catechist examines the children orally when they are around nine years old, before they take their first Holy Communion. Both of the Bamkov catechists expressed satisfaction that so many children had passed their exams: the year that this research was conducted, in the main Bamkov Catholic Church, 36 children passed, 2 failed, and 5 were held back because they were too young; in the smaller Sargwen Catholic Church, all seven candidates passed.

### ***Presbyterian Recitation***

The preparation of children for first Holy Communion is done by means of classes on *country Sundays*. Pius, the church secretary conducts the instruction orally in both English and Lamnso' using a Presbyterian catechism text that is in English. The children are between the ages of 10-12, and so have by that time become accustomed to English instruction in school, although they are not fluent in English. The classes cover the names of the books of the Bible, the story of creation, stories from the Bible regarding figures such as Abraham, Noah, Isaac and Jacob, and the story of Jesus Christ. Pius also teaches the children to recite the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed and Ten Commandments in both English and Lamnso'. The examination is conducted orally in English by the pastor.

One Presbyterian man from Kumbo noted that children in urban areas are tested by a written exam and those from rural areas are tested orally. This highlights the differences in ages and educational experience between Catholic and Presbyterian children in catechism classes: Catholic children have not yet learned to read when they begin catechism classes so their only recourse to learning texts is to memorize them orally. This practice is further reinforced by the large amount of recited material in a Catholic service, in which the congregation may be required to recite prayers in their Lamnso', Pidgin, or English versions. In contrast, the Presbyterian children begin catechism classes at an older age and have possibly learned more

English and more reading skills in school. Furthermore, recitation occupies a smaller proportion of the Presbyterian service and is only in English.

### ***Baptist Recitation***

According to Bernard, the Baptists do not read or recite prayers in their services, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer. They do, however, write down prayer requests made by members and continue to pray for the same items at subsequent services. Church members also memorize verses of the Bible for Sunday School classes. This is a limited form of recitation in that they are learned and repeated orally. However, new texts are added each Sunday and the previous ones are not repeated.

### ***Interchurch Cooperation and the Bible as "Text Concept"***

Every other month, members from each of the four churches in Bamkov get together for a session on Scripture reading skills. This is convened under the auspices of the Lamnso' Old Testament translation project and rotates its venue among the four churches. One session I observed was held in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church and conducted by Chrysanthus, a leader of the Rookay Church of Christ in Bamkov. The session was conducted entirely in Lamnso' and consisted of exercises in reading tone markings, something that would not be covered in school English-medium literacy instruction. There were representatives from each of the churches in Bamkov, and each participant received a scripture portion at the end of the session. The expectation was that these representatives, which were mostly young people, would return to their respective churches to practice and share the techniques they learned in their youth groups.

As described in Chapter Two, in the introduction to the research context, the four churches in Bamkov belong to the four denominations represented in the Lamnso' Old Testament project administrated by CABTAL, a Cameroonian Bible translation organization. Each denomination contributes personnel that work on the Old Testament translation committee. From the Bamkov churches, it happens that the Baptist pastor and the two Church of Christ leaders are among the translation committee members. In commenting on the cooperation in the translation process by members from all four churches, the Baptist pastor attributes their lack of disagreement to a *modus operandi* of translating strictly "what is there" as opposed to taking into account each church's respective "doctrinal issues" and "practice."

We are four denominations that are doing translation. As we are meeting, the first thing is that we are friends. And then the second thing that we have agreed is that we don't want to deal with doctrinal issues because people believe differently. What I believe is not what

the other men believe, and what the other men believe is not what I believe. And because of that we leave aside doctrinal issues. And we have agreed that we are translating the Bible. Whether we translate, and the rest of the people will not follow what is there, or they will follow what is there, we are meaning translating the Bible just exactly as it is written. And we cannot change a word because this denomination is not accepting or this one is not accepting. No, we translate as it is there. So we don't deal with doctrinal issues. Since we have kept aside doctrinal issues, we see ourselves as one, doing one work. So when we go back to our church, that one goes back to his church, this one goes back to his church, they do what they practice in that church.

These two accounts of inter-church cooperation surrounding literacy instruction and the translation process suggest a common conception among the churches that the original meaning of scripture should be captured in the translation process and that meaning is reproduced when it is decoded from the printed page. Thus processes such as translation and literacy instruction attract support from all four churches because they are rooted in the notion that they are means of accessing the meaning of the Bible, something that each church values highly. Yet paradoxically, each church maintains beliefs and practices surrounding the biblical text that are seen to be distinctive and in conflict with the other churches in Bamkov.

Brian Malley (2004a) gives a plausible explanation for this paradox from his anthropological study of evangelical usage of the Bible. Malley argues that the Bible is not a text but a "text concept." By this he means that there is no particular text that one can point to as defining the Bible. Unlike the Qur'an, which is defined by a particular text in a particular language, the concept of the Bible admits various versions which are textually different. From his study of evangelical usage in an American church, Malley (2004b:67) derives four features that comprise the text concept that defines the Bible: designation, artifactual stereotype, assumption of textuality, and presumption of common meaning.

"The Bible" is a *designation*, which in practice may refer to various versions. According to Malley,

The presentation of these Bibles as "translations" and their common use of "the Bible" as a naming template suggest that they are all "versions" of the same thing (emphasis in original, Malley 2004b:67).

The *artifactual stereotype* refers to the common (although not universal) properties of the book, including elements such as leather binding, text layout, and use of "the Bible" in the title. The *assumption of textuality* refers to the property that the Bible is normally a text. The *presumption of common meaning* refers to the feature that "the various texts called Bibles are expected to have (basically) the same contents and to say (basically) the same thing" (Malley 2004b:67).

Applied to Bamkov inter-church cooperation, the notion of a text concept explains how each church can be enthusiastic about cooperating in Bible translation and literacy activities in the face significant differences in belief and practice among the four churches. Each church assumes that the Lamnso' Bible translation is notionally the same as the translations that they are accustomed to using, and thus they can transfer their practices to the Lamnso' translation without any perceived significant change in meaning. Thus Bible translation and literacy activities are not perceived as sectarian because each church believes that it is simply accessing the same Bible (albeit a different version) with which it is already familiar.

### ***Beyond the Local: International Influences***

In Chapter Three it was clear that there were international influences which affected schooling, language choice, and ultimately Bible translation in Cameroon. This section considers two examples of recent international influences which affect the context surrounding scripture use in Bamkov.

In an apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II (2002) inaugurated the *Year of the Rosary* from October 2002 to October 2003. He also proposed a new set of mysteries commemorating the public life of Jesus, to be contemplated on Thursdays by those who practice a weekly schedule of rosary meditation. This Thursday addition to the rosary cycle was observed in practice in Bamkov in February 2003. The incorporation of these innovations so quickly (from its announcement in October 2002 to its implementation in February 2003) suggests a well-organized system of dissemination between Rome the Bamkov Catholic Church. It also suggests that the well-established practice of the rosary is subject to innovation.

A second example of international influence was a service celebrating the Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP) observed in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church. This service is an annual event in which millions of women from more than 170 countries participate (Lienemann-Perrin 2003:173). The particular service observed in Bamkov was conducted entirely by women, except for the routine church announcements given by Pius. A special liturgy in English was distributed to four women who read in turn the portions assigned to them (WWDP 2003). The liturgy was designed to be a complete service, but the women adapted it, reading the first three topics of Welcome, Call to Worship, and Prayers of Thanksgiving, but reverting to the Presbyterian Service Book for Prayers of Confession. The women also substituted songs that were known in the church because they did not have copies of the song sheets that accompanied the special liturgy.

The liturgy also included three scripture readings, all from the New Testament. The first two were reading in Lamnso' and the third in English. Then a woman preached a sermon on these three readings<sup>13</sup> and the theme of the liturgy, "Holy Spirit, Fill Us." The woman preached in Lamnso' and another woman translated into English. Following the sermon, the Apostles' Creed was recited in English, an item that is normally said in Sunday services but not included in the special liturgy.

The liturgy was prepared by Christian women of Lebanon and prayers for the people of Lebanon were featured in the service. It also made the suggestion to decorate the church "to look as Lebanese as possible" with evergreens and candles. To comply with these instructions for this service, evergreen fronds had been placed along the walls of the church and six large candles were set on the floor across the front of the church.

In analyzing this service, there are several points to consider. First and foremost is the fact that it occurred at all. The designated date for the service was 7 March 2003, and yet this service was celebrated on Sunday, 27 July 2003. So having missed the original date, for unspecified reasons the pastor and women of the church decided that it was important to enact this liturgy in July of the same year. Although scarcely conclusive, this suggests that participating in this rite was an important expectation of a Presbyterian congregation in Cameroon, so they were fulfilling their obligation albeit late. Second, since they only had four copies of the liturgy, they adapted it to fit the parts that the congregation could recite; they included the Confession from the Service Book, the Apostles' Creed, and songs known to the congregation. Third, there was a reversal of the pattern that the preacher normally preaches in English and the interpreter translates into Lamnso'. Again, although hardly conclusive, this suggests that the woman assigned was more comfortable preaching in Lamnso' than in English, and since the service was already an exceptional circumstance, she chose to reverse custom and preach in Lamnso'.

### **Themes from the Data: Comparison of Scripture Specialists**

The primary specialists described have a number of characteristics in common. Each has a low level of education and a commensurately low level of English proficiency, and yet each one requires some literacy skills and some English proficiency in order to perform the tasks required of them. It would be impossible for any of the primary scripture specialists to accomplish their responsibilities if they

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 2:1-4, Luke 1:26-38, Galatians 5:22-23.



were illiterate or monolingual Lamnso' speakers. In each case they combined enough school-knowledge and enough church-experience to carry out their responsibilities.

In contrast to their low level of education, their church experience is highly accomplished at the local level. Rather than achieving their specialization through formal training such as seminary or Bible school, the primary scripture specialists appear to be highly proficient ordinary scripture users who have acquired roles that require them to use scripture in group settings. The evidence points to the fact that they themselves learned to use scripture by long participation in similar group settings.

All the primary scripture specialists are required to master the use of documents other than the Bible. Rachael, the Catholic catechist, uses the prayerbook, catechism and lectionary to lead morning prayers and to conduct catechism classes and doctrine lessons. Pius, the Presbyterian church secretary, uses the service book and denominational diary to lead the service and identify the assigned scripture portions to be read. Beatrice, the Baptist Sunday School teacher, uses Baptist Bible study materials to conduct her class. All of these non-scriptural materials form part of the context for understanding scripture according to their church's tradition. Moreover, most of these non-scriptural materials are in English or Pidgin. The exception<sup>14</sup> is the Catholic catechism and prayerbook in Lamnso'.

All of the primary scripture specialists do some writing in conjunction with their responsibilities, and virtually all the writing observed was in English. Some of the writing was in the form of lists of people's name and their contributions and announcements to be read in church. Some people took notes in preparation for lessons or sermons that they delivered. In their preparations, all of these had access to and used the Lamnso' New Testament, and some used English Bible translations as well.

Those designated as *primary scripture specialists* in each of the churches in Bamkov have little or no specialized training beyond primary school. They appear to be ordinary members with respect to their education and their training through the course of programs available to every member of their respective churches. With respect to literacy practices, they have applied minimal reading, writing, and English language skills to the texts they were required to use in their churches.

Virtually every characteristic described concerning the use of scripture by primary scripture specialists also applies to secondary scripture specialists: they all

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<sup>14</sup> Another exception is the Lamnso' Choir Association materials, but these were used by a subset of the congregation and not in regular Sunday services.

use biblical texts in English and Lamnso'; they are required to use non-biblical texts in English and Lamnso' to conduct their responsibilities; and they write in English when they are required to write. However, in each church the significant difference between primary and secondary scripture specialists is the degree of specialization and proficiency. Each secondary scripture specialist in Bamkov has at least some secondary schooling plus theological training. Raphael, the Catholic priest and Patrick, the Presbyterian pastor, each have high school plus four years of seminary training. Bernard, the Baptist pastor has completed secondary schooling in conjunction with his seminary training. Both Cornelius and Chrysanthus, the two Church of Christ leaders, have secondary schooling plus Bible school degrees. All of this education and training was conducted in English. Most of them display a diploma somewhere on their wall, and more importantly, each exhibits a shelf of books acquired during theological training. As a result, all of the secondary specialists are much more proficient in English and the use of texts in English. This is borne out by the number of books in English that they consult in preparation for Sunday services.

Among the four churches in Bamkov a variety of relationships are manifest between the secondary and primary specialists. Between the Catholic priest and the catechist there is a one-to-one delegation such that the catechist is in charge in the priest's absence. Between the Presbyterian pastor and the lay preachers there is a more dispersed responsibility of one-to-several for leading the liturgy and preaching in the pastor's absence. The relationship between the Baptist pastor and the Sunday School teacher is better characterized as oversight since he is present when she presents her lesson. However, in all of these varied relationships, the secondary specialists are clearly more knowledgeable about the ways to use scripture within their respective traditions. One way that they manifest this is in their advice or descriptions towards primary specialists: Raphael advises catechists not to give doctrine lessons at well-attended Sunday services; Patrick advises lay preachers not to alter the assigned diary of readings (even though he himself did); and Chrysanthus describes a member as preaching from a tract in his absence because the member was not qualified to prepare a sermon.

There are a number of features that the secondary scripture specialists in Bamkov had in common which help to form a profile of what constitutes a secondary specialist. All of the secondary specialists have had secondary (high school) education and some specialized theological training. As a result of this training they have specialized knowledge that no one else in their churches possessed. Each is able

to conduct the entire range of services that are normal for his<sup>15</sup> denomination: baptism, first Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, funerals, etc. Each has a specialized knowledge of the Bible and can draw on that knowledge to prepare and deliver sermons that were appropriate to the denominational context. The preparation of these sermons takes into account the way that texts are selected in that tradition, whether by lectionary, diary, or topic, as well as the non-scriptural sources, such as commentaries, concordances, and cross-references appropriate to the denomination. Moreover, since the schooling and theological training is all conducted in English, they have each acquired a personal library of books in English, including English Bible translations, which they use in sermon preparation. In addition to these English sources, they also use the Lamnso' New Testament translation.

However, in interviews and observations regarding the choices of Lamnso', Pidgin and English versions of Bible translation, whether in their personal preparation or in public reading, the assumption is that these various translations all more or less mean the same thing. Sometimes one or another translation is read in services, and in the case of the Baptist service, both the Lamnso' and English versions are read, but the principal factors for the choice of a version (in English, Pidgin, or Lamnso') were the availability of the versions, the ability of the readers to read one version or another, and the ability of the congregation to comprehend one language or another. There was no evidence observed that the participants regarded one version as more authentically "the Bible" than another. In fact, the equality and importance of the translated Lamnso' text as a representation of the Bible was an important component in the cooperation among the four churches in the Bible translation endeavor.

Another feature that the Bamkov secondary scripture specialists have in common is that they all speak Lamnso'. In observing them as they operated in the community of Bamkov, they always communicated in Lamnso' with other Lamnso' speakers. Only when they were including me or another non-Lamnso' speaker in the conversation would they switch to English or Pidgin. Because there are few such non-Lamnso' speakers in Bamkov, this was rarely observed. This preponderance of day-to-day Lamnso' communication certainly has an influence on their language choice in church services. Even though they are thoroughly trained through English schooling and are all capable of conducting the services entirely in English, they know from their daily experience that many in the congregation would be excluded from understanding the service if they did not use Lamnso'.

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<sup>15</sup> None of the secondary specialists in Bamkov are female.

Another feature observed among the Catholic, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches in Bamkov is that the secondary scripture specialists are all Lamnso' speakers from elsewhere who have been appointed to these particular churches in Bamkov. These are all full-time workers who in theory could have taken appointments elsewhere in non-Lamnso' speaking churches, or conversely, these churches in Bamkov could have had non-Lamnso' speaking clergy appointed to them. This feature of specialist-from-outside-the-community no doubt further contributes to their status by distinguishing them from the primary scripture specialists who are all part-time workers and from Bamkov. It also means that their scripture usage is partially attributable to their status as Lamnso' speakers. Non-Lamnso' speaking clergy might make different language choices regarding scripture use.

In contrast, the two Church of Christ secondary scripture specialists are both from Bamkov, and the churches are located next to their homes. They both support themselves from other jobs and received no salary from their churches. This is characteristic of all the Churches of Christ in the Kumbo area: none of the preachers are salaried by the congregations, and so in a sense, all live at home and are part-time workers. The exceptions are a few evangelists and staff employed by the missionary at the Church of Christ office in Kumbo. The small size of the two Bamkov congregations probably accounts for why there is only one scripture specialist in each church and no primary scripture specialists were observed. Bible school is not a requirement for using scripture in the Churches of Christ, and the fact that they both happened to be secondary-educated Bible school graduates puts them within the profile of secondary scripture specialists.

All the scripture specialists practice the use of scripture in services where texts are drawn from more than one language. All the scripture specialists treat the various Bible translations—English, Pidgin, and Lamnso'—as equally being scripture, if the translation appears in the form of a New Testament or complete Bible. The exception is the Pidgin lectionary, which is in a form not recognized by the Protestant churches.<sup>16</sup> There was never a suggestion by any scripture specialists in the interviews that one translation was more authentically scripture than another. However, the scripture specialists with higher English proficiency are able to access more versions of the Bible and more resources for using it, such as concordances and commentaries. However, all the scripture specialists demonstrate positive attitudes

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<sup>16</sup> Until recently a Pidgin Bible translation was only available in the form of a Catholic lectionary. In 2000 a Pidgin New Testament was published but it was not observed in use in Bamkov.

towards the Lamnso' New Testament translation and use it by preference when they read selections from the New Testament in services.

### **Conclusion**

By focusing on the data surrounding those who use scripture in Bamkov, this chapter reveals patterns of activity among scripture users that are consistent with the theory of scripture as social literacy. First of all it was noted that the skills of using scripture texts were not distributed evenly in any of the four Christian congregations. Hence the term *scripture specialist* was used to designate those few who were observed using scripture in service. In the cases where scripture was observed in use, it was not merely a matter of reading the texts, but of reading the right text in the right way for a particular church tradition. Specialists called upon a repertoire of literacy and linguistic skills as well as knowledge of their own church tradition.

Furthermore, among those designated as scripture specialists there were significant differences between those who were part-time workers in the church with only primary education, and full-time clergy who had secondary and theological education. The former, the primary scripture specialists, relied almost entirely on their experience within the church and with texts readily available in the church (such as catechisms and Bible studies) to arrive at the proper usage for their church tradition. The latter, secondary scripture specialists, relied on specialized theological training that taught them how to use specialized books, largely in English, not widely available in Bamkov.

Moreover, neither primary nor secondary scripture specialists read the Bible in isolation; the meaning of a particular passage never “interprets itself” without other contextual indicators of meaning. Scripture specialists select Bible passages according to the criteria of their denominations, and when a passage is read, there is usually some commentary on its meaning that the scripture specialist has prepared ahead of time. Even in the case when the Catholic priest recommended that the catechist should not preach on Sunday mornings, the lectionary juxtaposes three readings, which are read to a congregation with a common experience of the catechism; even without a homily, this setting provides a common context for interpretation. It can thus be concluded that the proper use of scripture by specialists in Bamkov is never simply an individual affair. The correct use of scripture is rooted in each church's collective practice.

The enthusiasm among the four churches for cooperating on the Lamnso' translation of the Bible is paradoxical. All four denominations have contributed personnel to the team that is producing the translation of the Lamnso' Old Testament.



Three of these translators are among the secondary scripture specialists<sup>17</sup> interviewed for this study. Cooperation was also evident at the local level in the way that the secondary scripture specialists would come together every other month for scripture use training events, rotating the venue among the four churches. The churches support the joint training because they are agreed on the importance of people being able to read the Lamnso' translation. These activities for which they are so enthusiastic can be broadly characterized as the production and decoding of the Lamnso' Bible text.

However, their agreement on the importance of the scripture text and being able to read it in Lamnso' is contrasted by their disagreements about its practice and meaning. The same people who support the translation and literacy instruction endeavor are also quick to portray their own church's practice of the use of scripture as the correct one. This is implicit in the Baptist pastor's explanation that the translation committee had agreed not to discuss doctrine but only the meaning of the text. In general terms, the scripture specialists in Bamkov were united in their enthusiasm for scripture texts in their own language, but distinguished by their use of scripture. When this is couched in the scripture theory of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, it leads to a significant conclusion: scripture is not the text itself but lies in the users beliefs and actions surrounding the text, and once the text becomes treated as scripture, it is immediately framed—contextualized—as a certain kind of practice rooted in a denominational tradition. The practice of scripture where a community understands itself in relation to God is different for each church in Bamkov.

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<sup>17</sup> Bernard, Cornelius, and Chrysanthus.

## Chapter Six

### Further Analysis and Implications of the Data

#### *Introduction*

The previous three chapters have elucidated the contexts surrounding scripture use in four churches in Bamkov. The role of context, particularly educational, sociolinguistic, and denominational context, has been shown to be crucial in analyzing the ways in which scripture is used and understood among the four churches. The present chapter discusses several conclusions that may be drawn from this data.

In the Introduction to this thesis, the case of Bernadette's use of the Lamnso' translation of Jonah was employed to frame the issues addressed in this study. The case raised questions regarding the role of Lamnso' vs. English translations in biblical interpretation, the way valid Christian interpretation of the Bible is achieved in the Bamkov churches, and the possibility of a distinction between *biblical use* and *biblical interpretation*.

In this present chapter an interpretation based on the research findings is proposed to address these issues. This interpretation is also used as a basis for considering two authors', Probst (1993) and Sanneh (1989), analyses of the role of literacy and Bible translation in African church settings. Finally, an alternative model based on Hornberger's *continua of biliteracy* is proposed to account for sociolinguistic complexity surrounding biblical usage in Bamkov churches.

#### *The Case of Bernadette's Interpretation of Jonah Revisited*

The work of Gee has inspired the approach to analysis of Bible translation taken in this study. A theme of Gee's writing is the reassessment of ways that certain activities, which are assumed to be solely cognitive, prove to be influenced by social factors. Gee's books (1992, 1996, 2003) argue that thinking, literacy, and learning, all practices which appear to be "mental" achievements, are primarily social achievements. This section will take a similar approach to Bible translation. Instead of considering Bible translation as primarily a text containing meaning for the reader, the data supports the argument that ways that the various Bibles used in Bamkov are artifacts surrounded by social processes.

These processes are concretely illustrated in the case (described in the Introduction) of Bernadette's use of the Lamnso' translation of the book of Jonah. Since this case was used to generate the research questions pursued in this study, it is

appropriate to revisit the case. Bernadette's case is examined with respect to five social aspects surrounding the use of Bible translation: acquisition of linguistic competencies, acquisition of literacy competencies, creation of the text, distribution and use of the text, and interpretation of the text. These five aspects of the social meaning of Bible translation texts illustrate the themes running through this study.

To review the case presented in the Introduction, Bernadette described her practice of *country medicine*. She described some of her herbal remedies and how she wrote them down in a notebook. She also described her practice of divination as a part of *country medicine*. Undoubtedly she was aware that there was some controversy surrounding the practice of divination for Christians, so she sought to justify her practice from the Bible. She consulted several Bibles, but found the Lamnso' translation most convincing because the word for divination used in Jonah was the same as the word for her practice of divination. She took this to mean that the Bible legitimizes the practice of divination. However, after subsequent investigation, the case points out that none of the Bamkov church leaders construed the Jonah passage to justify divination. Furthermore, one Catholic priest remarked that Bernadette was probably a Baptist because her use of the Bible was characteristically un-Catholic.

Bernadette's *linguistic competencies* are a consequence of her social and educational circumstances. She speaks Lamnso' as her first language. It is the language she speaks in her home and with the other residents of Bamkov. Bernadette also has a limited knowledge of English. She learned her English in primary school and has few opportunities to expand her knowledge of English in her daily life. Her three children living at home are in local nursery and primary schools and as yet speak very little English. The only other members of her household who know some English are her husband, a cloth merchant, and her daughter, who is attending a Baptist boarding high school in another town. Bernadette and her family are characteristic of the people I met in each of the churches in Bamkov: some know more English than others, but all know Lamnso' best and speak it by preference with other Lamnso' speakers.

Although the degree of bilingualism is an individual trait, Bernadette's knowledge is characteristic of the linguistic options available in Bamkov. Everyone speaks Lamnso'. Everyone who has been to school has been exposed to some English in oral and written form. Everyone who has had contact with non-Nso' people in the larger towns of Kumbo or Bamenda has had some exposure to Pidgin as well, as this is the common language of daily communication in offices, stores and the marketplace. Although Bernadette is not a scripture specialist, all the scripture

specialists studied here share her linguistic profile: all come from communities that speak Lamnso', all have acquired some English through schooling and Pidgin through contact with Cameroonians from other language communities.<sup>1</sup>

Bernadette's *literacy competencies* are also a consequence of her social and educational circumstances. She learned to read and write in English in primary school. English is her primary language for literacy activities, although she has little need to read and write in the normal routines of her daily life. She manages her household, the cultivation of her farm plots, and her side businesses of dressmaking and pastry production with little reference to literacy skills. However, her literacy skills are employed in her practice of *country medicine* to write recipes in English for herbal remedies and occasionally for Bible reading.

Literacy skills and English skills are thus both acquired through schooling, and are integrally related as proficiencies. Thus, Bernadette approaches the English Bible through English as her second language, but as the primary language in which she learned to read and write. Conversely, she approaches the Lamnso' Bible translation as a mother tongue Lamnso' speaker but with little practice in reading and writing Lamnso'. This quality of Bernadette's literacy skills is also characteristic of the scripture specialists observed in Bamkov. Those who are literate are also proficient in English to a commensurate degree. Thus primary scripture specialists have low levels of literacy skills and English proficiency, and secondary scripture specialists have correspondingly higher levels acquired through secondary and tertiary education.

The *creation of the text* of the Bible is also a consequence of social processes. Each of the English Bibles in Bernadette's possession has a history of social issues which motivated its production. These issues surrounding the production of various English versions of the Bible are beyond the scope of this study but they are documented elsewhere (Bruce 1970; Daniell 2003). However, the social context for the creation the Lamnso' Bible translation is a major concern of this study. Chapter Three documents the antecedents for the use of Cameroonian languages for Bible translation. It also describes the cooperation among the four denominations that produced the publication of the Lamnso' New Testament and the ongoing cooperative translation process that produced the translation of the book of Jonah in

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<sup>1</sup> No counter-examples were observed of anyone communicating in Bamkov in any other languages, although there was some evidence of some knowledge of other languages. One secondary scripture specialist from the Church of Christ knows some French and biblical Hebrew from studies conducted elsewhere, and the mallam associated with the local mosque knows some Arabic.

Bernadette's possession. Chapter Five additionally makes the point that this cooperation among the churches to produce the text is rooted in a common conception that the Lamnso' translation means the same thing (more or less) as the English and Pidgin translations of the Bible.

The *distribution and use* of Bible translations is another consequence of social processes, which are largely organized along denominational lines. The fact that Bernadette owns several copies of the Bible in multiple versions is consonant with her Baptist value for personally reading the Bible. Moreover, reading the Bible in order to comprehend it is also an important Baptist value. Thus, Bernadette consulted several versions of the Bible in order to get a better understanding of the meaning of the Jonah passage. This personal use of various Bible translations in one's own home is not characteristic of scripture use by all the Christians in Bamkov, and it occasioned the (correct) observation by Roger, the Catholic priest, that Bernadette was probably a Baptist.<sup>2</sup>

The final social aspect considered in the case of Bernadette is the *interpretation of the text*. All the church leaders in Bamkov are in agreement that Bernadette misinterpreted this particular passage in Jonah; no church leader in Bamkov believes that this passage justifies the practice of divination. The interpretation of particular passages of the Bible has not been the focus of this study. Nevertheless, this study provides a plausible explanation for the way Bernadette's misinterpretation is socially achieved: her misinterpretation can be construed as her inability to access additional written resources and training which the scripture specialists use to arrive at valid Baptist biblical interpretation. She understood the words of the Jonah passage, but without the additional resources used by scripture specialists, her comprehension of the text was not sufficient for her to arrive at the correct Baptist interpretation. Bernadette achieved valid Baptist *use* of the Bible through personal Bible study, but not a valid *interpretation* that would be recognized by other Baptists.

To return to Gee's point made at the beginning of this section, thinking, literacy and learning are highly influenced by social context. People do not think, read, or learn *in general*. Bernadette's case illustrates how a number of contextual social features influenced the way that she made meaning from the Jonah passage. These contextual details matter because the text itself, although important, does not stipulate its own valid usage or interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the Catholic Church in Bamkov is beginning to promote the reading of the Bible outside of church, it is doing so through small groups in people's homes led by catechists.



## Two Alternative Accounts of Literacy and Bible Translation

This argument that social factors influence meaning-making surrounding the Bible contrasts sharply with other accounts which emphasize influences in the opposite direction, namely, that the language of the Bible and its inherent textual form are themselves instrumental in influencing the ways people make meaning. Two such accounts regarding Bible translation and literacy as they relate to African church settings are considered and critiqued here. One account argues that literacy produces social consequences on oral societies; the second account claims that the translation of the Bible into the local language produces consequences among congregations which previously did not have access to the Bible in that language. An alternative formulation is then proposed which does not dichotomize contextual features surrounding the Bible such as oral/literate and first language/second language.

The first account is framed as the "consequences of literacy" thesis. It considers the theoretical background of this thesis and proceeds to examine a particular example of this thesis in a study by Peter Probst (1993) of how literacy was associated with power in the Church of the Lord, Aladura. Probst's study is useful because, first, it explicitly appeals to a theory which posits that literacy itself has consequences in society. Much of the work of New Literacy Studies (NLS) has been to contest this notion that literacy is autonomous, so it is instructive to consider a study that takes a position of which NLS is so pointedly critical. Second, Probst's study examines events which occurred in Nigerian churches from the period following World War I to the 1960s. As such, it is one of the few analyses of the role of literacy in an African church context. The relative proximity of these events in Nigeria to events described in Cameroon make the Probst article relevant to this study. Following a presentation of Probst's arguments, a critique is offered based on the theories and data presented in the present study.

The second account considered could be framed as "the consequences of Bible translation" thesis because it argues that Bible translation has also (like literacy) produced certain social consequences. In *Translating the Message*, Lamin Sanneh (1989) argues that Christianity can be understood as a Bible translation movement, and it is the quality of translatability that accounts for the growth of Christianity. In theorizing Bible translation, he is concerned with the charge that Christian mission was complicit in colonialism. Sanneh's endeavors to separate the translated vernacular Bible texts from the missionaries who created them, thus crediting the texts with the growth of Christianity and absolving the texts (and the religion) of complicity with the missionaries in cultural imperialism. Sanneh's study is examined

because it emphasizes the vernacular qualities of Bible translation, because it draws examples from African contexts, and because of its prominence in the field of mission studies, noted by the number of scholars (Smalley 1991; Bediako 1995; Walls 1996) who point to this study as evidence for the importance of Bible translation in mission.

### **The "Consequences of Literacy" Thesis**

In Chapter Two, we examined how NLS theorizes literacy as practices (ways of acting) surrounding reading and writing that only make sense in their particular social contexts. NLS scholars, mostly linguists, anthropologists and educators, emphasize that understanding literacy in its local context challenges theories that define literacy as being more or less the same everywhere, and the acquisition of literacy skills as having more or less the same consequences on all individuals and societies. NLS scholars document their theoretical claims through research, largely ethnographic, on the varieties of literacy practices found within a society. The NLS literature (Gee 1996; Street 1995) refers to this highly contextualized way of characterizing literacy as *social literacies*<sup>3</sup> (pluralized because there are many literacies), and to opposing theories as *autonomous literacy*, which emphasizes the notion that literacy is independent of social factors.

Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1963) were among the first to posit the "consequences of literacy" in their article under this title, arguing that the development of alphabetic literacy in Greece resulted in social transformations that eventually led to modern European notions of history, logic, individuality and democratic society. Accordingly, they claim that literate societies can be distinguished from oral societies (which have not experienced these social transformation), and argue that it is the property of literate-ness that accomplished these distinctions. The plausibility of such claims that literacy shapes cognitive and social processes rests on a dichotomy between orality and literacy that distinguishes these as having separate agency in society (Collins and Blot 2003:17). The extension of these claims beyond European civilization led to the application of the oral/literate dichotomy in the analysis of how literacy operated when introduced into indigenous African societies.

Following Goody and Watt, John Janzen (1985) takes up the consequences-of-literacy thesis in relation to literacy's effects on African religion, claiming that

. . . religions of the Book . . . emphasize the 'true interpretation' of things and the condemnation of heresies . . . They are exclusive

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<sup>3</sup> Street (1995) also uses the term *ideological literacy* to refer to his theory.

religions to which one is 'converted' . . . Literate religions are less tolerant of change, once their fixed point of reference has been determined to be a sacred text . . . literate religions are individualizing and salvationistic . . . (Janzen 1985 quoted in Isichei 1995:9)

It is with the claim that the *literate-ness* of Christianity enforces certain negative effects on otherwise oral African indigenous religions that I would like to take up the debate on the nature of literacy and place the theories and data from the present study in contradistinction to claims about the consequences of literacy.

Note that the claim is no longer just that literacy has negative consequences, but that it has *negative* consequences on indigenous cultures, and the evidence for this perspective is the role of literacy in the religion of the Christian colonizers, which is understood to have had negative consequences on indigenous societies. This interpretation assumes that literacy is a property of the religion of the colonizers and orality is a property of indigenous religion. Laura Donaldson's comment in her postcolonial interpretation of the book of Ruth exemplifies this perspective:

The act of reading the Bible has been fraught with difficulty and contradiction for indigenous peoples. On the one hand, the translation of God's Book in Native vernacular comes with a high price: the forcing of oral tongues into static alphabets and its context of a colonizing Christianity. (Donaldson 1999:21-22)

Peter Probst takes up this claim in his analysis of the role of literacy in the history of one particular African Independent Church, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), which developed its own particular expressions of literacy. The title to Probst's (1993) article *The Letter and the Spirit*<sup>4</sup> is symbolic of the conflict between religious authority based in texts, such as the Bible, and religious authority that is free of the constraints of texts. The title alludes to the biblical reference that the letter kills and the spirit gives life.<sup>5</sup> Probst reviews the previously published accounts of the Church of the Lord, and concludes from his analysis that literacy inherently perpetrated violence against the indigenous oral culture within the Church of the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> The full title is *The letter and the spirit: literacy and religious authority in the history of the Aladura movement in western Nigeria*.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:6.

### **Claims for Oral and Literate Sources of Authority**

The *aladura* movement<sup>6</sup> began as prayer groups within the missionary instituted churches in West Africa, but eventually separated from those churches. The root difference between the *aladura* churches and the missionary churches can be characterized as a different pattern of authority and decision-making. In contrast to the older missionary-instituted churches, the *aladura*

followed the basic pattern of organization of African communities. This includes less hard-and-fast application of principles and rules, great dependence upon and adherence to the strong personality of their leaders, group decision by arriving at conclusions through general consensus of opinion, and at the same time considerable freedom for individuals to express themselves and indulge in personal idiosyncrasies. (Omoyajowo 1978:109)

This approach to authority fits within the larger context of the “whole African Independent church movement, [which] is based on the concept of the prophet—men upon whom the Spirit of God comes in a special way and who have been empowered to deliver new messages from God” (Loewan 1976:419).

The founder of the Church of the Lord, Josiah Oshitelu, was a teacher in an Anglican school in Nigeria. He had a series of visions and documented these in diagrammatic “seals” and a cryptic script written from right to left. After he was dismissed from the Anglican Church for his unorthodox revelations, he founded the first congregation of the Church of the Lord in 1930 at the age of 28. Oshitelu presided over a church movement in which he was the founding prophet. He believed himself called by God in order to “show all men that God spoke to Africans directly” (Turner 1965:7). This church, under his leadership, would continue to be characterized in later years by its “reliance on dreams, visions, and spirit-messages” (Turner 1965:8). Oshitelu not only participated in a tradition of prophets common to the *aladura*, we have evidence that he perpetuated this tradition through his tenure. Parrinder gives an account from his visit in the early 1950s of how written forms of ecstatic utterances continued to be commonly used in the Church of the Lord:

A particular feature of this sect is the use of “seal” words. These are long, indecipherable inventions, printed in their hymnbooks and pamphlets, and which are taken as revelations of the Lord. Some appear to be variations on well reported exclamations such as “Hallelujah” which gives the long seal word “Ollahhallahhajieuhaahhieohuhuhllalti”. Others are developing repetitions: “Gieobiee Gieobieerar”, Arieubb-Arieuullate-Arieubblattakukllal”. These have no Yoruba or English translation.

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<sup>6</sup> The *aladura* movement was actually a series of separate movements in western Nigeria between 1918 and 1930 that resulted in several church denominations founded on prophets and healing.

The “seal” words are given in ecstasy, when speaking in tongues.  
(Parrinder 1953:123)

Probst’s analysis draws attention to how literacy was used to establish authority in the Church of the Lord. The written form of Oshitelu’s revelations was a key part of legitimizing his authority as founding prophet and establishing the Church of the Lord’s distinct identity. The sacred seals were a sign of God’s direct communication to Oshitelu and the Church of the Lord’s independence from the missionary church. Probst also draws attention to how this authority, associated with literacy, results in the imposition of a new social/political/religious order. In this view, it is the technology of literacy that is itself inherently an instrument of domination. Probst’s regards literacy itself as having the power to affect social consciousness in a negative way. Because literacy “correlates with the experience of the violent forms of colonial domination”, this is evidence of the inherent “violence of the letter,” Derrida’s term for the negative social consciousness that accompanies literacy (1993:208).

Probst interprets the written form of Oshitelu’s revelation as a bid to contest the White Man’s authority by establishing an alternative sacred text. Oshitelu was expressing his “independence from the Holy Book of the White Man as a means of political and religious domination” (1993:203). The Bible is implicated as an instrument of religious power embedded in the religion of the colonial administration, not because of any particular content in it, but principally because it is a text: “In particular, it was the issue of the Bible as a fixed text which resulted in the provision of an instrument for defining, allotting, and controlling religious authority in a changing social environment” (1993:200). For Probst, the fact that Oshitelu conveyed his divine revelations by writing an alternative holy text indicates that Oshitelu appropriated the technology of writing to legitimize his own authority in protest against the colonial institutions, both church and state.

There is another layer of implication in this analysis, namely, that orality is linked with traditional pre-Christian religious beliefs, and the written word with the new Christian order. Probst interprets Parrinder’s account of the holy seals (where utterances given in ecstasy are written down) as evidence of the “indigenous capacity to establish literacy within the religious discourse of the church members without changing the underlying pattern of a traditional belief-system on which this discourse rests” (1993:214). Thus (oral) speaking in tongues is linked to the more fundamental underlying indigenous beliefs, and literacy is embedded in the overlying Christian strata.



### **Critique of Probst's Analysis**

Probst's analysis of *aladura* literacy emphasizes an ideological perspective similar to NLS. He notes the interests at stake in the conflict between the *aladura* and the missionary churches and between the prophets and pastors. He also notes how focusing on literacy practices serves to highlight the interests of the various stakeholders. Probst fairly and correctly characterizes the violence that accompanied literacy in the colonial structures and missionary churches, and the alienation that the Yoruba felt as a result. However, because he frames his analysis as the "consequences of literacy," he arrives at an interpretation that casts literacy itself as a perpetrator of violence. Holy texts are characterized as having certain inherently textual properties which negatively affect religion. According to Probst, "As a result of the canonisation of this text, eclecticism, flexibility and diversity evolve into exclusiveness, rigidity and orthodoxy; contextuality turns into autonomy since the independence of writing from the limits of time and space makes the norms and values of literate belief systems valid everywhere regardless of specific actions and localised circumstances" (1993:199).

There are a number of dichotomies that Probst associates to substantiate this interpretation: literacy vs. orality, letter (death) vs. spirit (life), colonial vs. indigenous, missionary church vs. *aladura* church, pastors vs. prophets, and Christian vs. traditional belief. These dichotomies are merged to construct an interpretation where Oshitelu breaks with the fixed text (Bible), colonial power, and missionary church to establish a prophetic, indigenous, *aladura* church. However, by appropriating literacy, which is inextricably linked to power and authority, Oshitelu's church succumbs to the same violent features of literacy, and his written revelations become canonized as the new orthodoxy. According to this interpretation, the dichotomies line up neatly: literacy, embedded in the Christian-colonial discourses of the pastors, perpetuates the violence of the letter against the prophets whose orality is founded on the discourses of traditional beliefs.

By adopting an analysis that claims that texts have the power to legitimize authority and perpetrate violence, Probst has implicitly adopted the *autonomous model* of literacy. This model depicts literacy as an independent variable with the power to effect change on society. In effect, it reifies literacy, i.e., treats the abstract concept of literacy as if it were an agent of change. While Probst appropriately emphasizes the power relations surrounding literacy (relations between Oshitelu and the missionary church, and relations between prophets and pastors), he overemphasizes the independent ability of literacy to create these power relationships. Rather than looking at the discourses that legitimize the texts, Probst

claims that the texts legitimize the discourses: texts and scripts have features that in themselves create authority. These are the “consequences of literacy” for Probst.

By associating literacy with authority (power), Probst overlooks the ways that literacy can be an expression of marginality. The biblical interpretations of the *aladura* and the written revelations of Oshitelu began as marginal literacies. They did not become legitimized because they were literacies, but because a group of people who practiced them eventually acquired some measure of recognition, independence, and indeed, power. However, to trace the evolution of a specific expression of literacy from marginality in one institution (missionary church) to dominance in another (*aladura* church), is not a valid argument that all marginal literacies eventually become dominant ones.

Finally, by placing traditional Yoruba religious belief in the underlying substratum of *aladura* culture, Probst overlooks the fact that traditional religious belief is also historically situated, that it had a history before contact with Christianity, and that it continued to change after contact with Christianity. His assumption is that orality and traditional religious belief are more enduring, more conservative, and more fundamental than literacy and religious beliefs not indigenous to the Yoruba.<sup>7</sup>

#### ***Further Data Relevant to the Critique of the Autonomous Model of Literacy***

In addition to the theoretical difficulties with the position that literacy is inextricably linked with things colonial, Western, Christian, and violent, this study also presents data where literacy practices failed to line up with Probst's proposed dichotomies. Examples are cited from several chapters which contest Probst's claims, including instances where local language literacy practices represented both European and indigenous culture; where literacy practices were influenced by colonial, missionary and local agendas; and where differences in literacy usages were linked to whether participants were marginal or dominant in their context.

In Chapter Three, which introduced the sociolinguistic context of Bamkov, it was noted that in an environment where very little written material in any language was available in people's homes, the texts which consistently sold each year were diaries and calendars in Lamnso'. These were the annual "bestsellers" among Nso' literates. These diaries and calendars correlated the traditional Nso' 8-day week with

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<sup>7</sup> Ranger and Kimambo (1972:2) criticize histories "written on the assumption that only political institutions and external trade relationships changed in pre-colonial Africa", and not religious beliefs as well.

the 12 months and 7-day week of the European calendar. The attraction of these calendars was that they located the occurrences of country Sundays and local market days in relation to events governed by the 7-day calendar. Here the text and its use point to cultural ways of marking time that are both indigenous and European. The evidence points to the importance for Nso' people of knowing two cultural systems and the practice of reading Lamnso' calendars only makes sense where knowledge of those two systems is relevant.

Chapter Four traces the development of textual resources in Cameroon by the missionary institutions antecedent to the churches in Bamkov. The evidence points to the fact that each missionary institution had an agenda, and each one developed textual resources in different ways contingent on those agendas. The first Baptist Mission began by developing the languages of the two sites on the coast, at Duala and Bimbia, among the people where they were first working. It preceded any colonial power and so did not have to contend with issues related to an official language. The Basel Mission chose to develop two languages, Duala and Mungaka, for use in all the churches where it worked in Cameroon. It followed the German government's incursion into the interior of Cameroon, and subsequently introduced the German language as a subject for those who continued schooling after basic catechism in Duala or Mungaka. The Catholics developed catechism texts in local languages for use by local catechists. However, due to the large number of languages in Cameroon, they also developed materials in Pidgin for use by catechists where it was spoken.

Although the linguistic strategies differed, there was much that was common among the agendas of the missionary institutions. One common agenda was catechism, in the generic sense of teaching prospective Christians the fundamental doctrines and practices preparatory to baptism. This was the most common reason for developing vernacular texts, so that missionaries and catechists could use them as resources in the process of introducing Christian belief and practice. Schooling began, at least from the missionaries' perspective, to fulfill the purpose of preparing people to be Christians. Missionaries were often in favor of using local languages because it suited their purposes for Christian instruction. However, it was also indicated in Chapter Four that schooling may accomplish more than one agenda, and the colonial government and the Cameroonian students were both very enthusiastic about adding the English instruction to schooling. Practically this meant that speaking, reading, and writing English was also taught when, strictly speaking, it would not have been necessary for catechism. At times the desires of students to learn English prevailed against the missionaries' judgments of what was best for

them, and students' drive to become part of a literate workforce seemed to eclipse the schools' motivation to prepare Christians. Since World War I, the demand for English education was high by the government and students alike, and the mission schools were forced to accommodate those preferences into their programs. Nevertheless, Christian schools still continued to insist that their main reason for existence is to serve their respective churches. Thus in the history of schooling in Cameroon, literacy and language instruction was at the confluence of multiple agendas, and a characterization that equates schooling with a colonial agenda misses the various interests at stake.

Contrary to Probst's thesis, the evidence from Bamkov is that literacy does not always line up with power and authority; sometimes literacy practices are evidence of marginality in their context. An example of this in Chapter Five is the Lamnso' Choir Association (LCA) which is a locally initiated Christian organization which has created its own texts and instituted its own literacy practices around these texts. It is organized as a movement within Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC) and it has its own local chapters which engage in choir practice, Lamnso' Bible studies, and literacy classes. The LSA creates Bible study materials in Lamnso' which these chapters use as the basis for competition in their annual rallies. Thus in structure and activities, the LCA can be characterized as a subgroup within the PCC with its own distinctive literacy practices.

Thus even at the local level, the LCA's literacy practices are not the norm for the Presbyterian congregation in Bamkov. The dominant norm in the denomination is to use an English service book and at the discretion of the local congregations allow the use of local language Bible translations. Compared to the Catholic Church in Bamkov, which has integrated Lamnso' texts throughout its catechism and liturgy at the diocesan level, the LCA appears as an affiliated entity within the PCC rather than a complete local expression of the PCC. While the LCA may influence the larger denomination, the evidence at the time of research suggests that although the LCA literacy practices accommodated by the denomination, they are still marginal and only represent a segment of PCC practice in Bamkov.

If the LCA and its practices were *linguistically* marginal to the denomination in that they did not represent the norm for the PCC, the literacy practices of the Catholic catechist portrayed in Chapter Five could be characterized as *educationally* marginal to the expectations of the denomination. The normal trajectory for schools in Anglophone Cameroon is to prepare children to use texts in English. The fact that children do not always acquire a high level of English proficiency does nothing to diminish this as a goal of schooling. In the case of the Bamkov catechists, none of

them have achieved great proficiency in English. The catechist's lesson notes in English are evidence of this.

In further considering dominant and marginal literacies, the case of the Catholic catechist fits a profile that is marginal in several ways. First, she only completed primary education, and she has a low proficiency in English. This was evident in conversations I had with her as well as in her attempts to write English notes for her lesson. Second, she led morning prayers and catechism classes for women and children who had even less literacy skills and English proficiency than she. These literacy and language proficiencies were adequate to her tasks of leading morning prayers and teaching children. However when the congregation was assembled on Sunday mornings, these proficiencies were not adequate for giving a doctrine lesson in the priest's absence. People who speak in church were expected to have knowledge of the Bible that can only be acquired through secondary education. The catechist could train children in recitation of prayer and the understanding of the catechism, but she was inadequate to the task of speaking about scripture texts in the larger congregation, evidenced by the priest's advice to catechists not to give a lesson in the larger congregation. This analysis of the data suggests that while the catechist's competency was adequate for her literacy practices among women and children, the dominant literacy practice for the entire congregation required proficiencies in literacy and English, which only could be acquired through further schooling.

This observation leads to another important conclusion about the data: English education did not eclipse the importance of Lamnso' knowledge. While a high level of school-taught literacy and English proficiency was required to give a homily or lesson in a full Sunday morning service with over 500 in attendance, this does not diminish the importance of delivering the homily in Lamnso'. In other words, the knowledge required for becoming a priest was *acquired* through English schooling, and the priest continued to employ English literacy in his use of commentaries for his homily *preparation*. But when it came to the actual delivery, this priest preferred to deliver the homily in Lamnso'. All this leads to a significant overall conclusion concerning language and literacy in the Bamkov Catholic Church: it cannot be said that English is dominant and Lamnso' is not. Both languages are required to some degree by all scripture specialists.

This study considers the multiple ways that literacy is embedded in values, beliefs, and power relations, and how literacy can be used in both marginal and dominant ways. According to the data, literacy is not essentially colonial or indigenous. Nor is it neutral. In the accounts of the *aladura* church and the Bamkov



churches, literacy practices are demonstrated to be consistent with the social context of the institutions in which they are found, whether missionary or African.

### ***Translation as a Metaphor for Mission***

Mission scholars find Bible translation is an attractive metaphor for mission. The text of the Bible, something that is concrete and nearly a universal part of Christian practice, can be seen in a radically altered translated form, with a different grammar and lexicon, and possibly even a different script from the original source text. Yet at the same time there is also some organic relation of the translation to the original language, and it is this different-but-same quality that the appeal lies. Moreover, because language is a visible aspect of culture, use of the church community's language for translation appears to be a concrete example of approval of the culture associated with that community.

A number of scholars point to the theoretical and historical connections between Bible translation and Christian mission. For Andrew Walls the Christian faith is "infinitely translatable" (1996:28, 25). Walls goes on to link Christian faith specifically to translation of the Bible, commending such activity as a concrete example of mission:

Bible translation as a process is thus both a reflection of the central act on which the Christian faith depends and a concretization of the commission which Christ gave his disciples. Perhaps no other specific activity more clearly represents the mission of the Church. (1996:28)

Kwame Bediako also points to the importance of Bible translation for the expansion of Christianity in Africa and fostering of an indigenous quality in the character of Christianity:

The single most important element for building such an indigenous Christian tradition is therefore the Scriptures in the vernacular languages of a people.... There is probably no more important single explanation for the massive presence of Christianity on the African continent than the availability of the Scriptures in many African languages. (1995:62)

William Smalley credits the missionaries themselves as a major contributing factor to the acceptance by churches of translations into local languages. In his study entitled *Translation as Mission*, Smalley notes that missionaries found translation to be essential, and as a result

a large number of the churches which the missionary movement has helped to spawn have unequivocally accepted the Bible as accessible in the language of the people. Bible translation has played a major part in the establishment and spread of the church, particularly of its Protestant branches. (1991:6)

However, among those who acknowledge the theoretical and historical importance of Bible translation, it is Lamin Sanneh who most thoroughly elaborates Bible translation as a metaphor for mission and who explores the implications of translatability from the beginnings of Christian mission to the present. Therefore it is Sanneh's formulation of the role of Bible translation in mission and its social implications that we shall consider in the light of the theory and data presented in this study.

### ***The "Consequences of Bible Translation" Thesis***

In *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture*, Lamin Sanneh explores the translatability of the Bible and its consequences for the character of Christianity. For Sanneh, "mission has come preeminently to mean translation" (1989:7). He looks at the history of the expansion of Christianity and concludes that translation has been "the consistent element at the ground level of Christian mission" (1989:112). His argument moves from establishing translatability as a property of the Bible (a text) to positing a metaphorical translatability of Christianity, as if it too were a text. The translated Christianity assumes the characteristics of the vernacular culture in a manner analogous to the way a translated text assumes the characteristics of the vernacular language. So when Sanneh refers to translation, he does not just mean the translation of the Bible from one language to another, but the property of Christianity that allows it to be translated from one culture to another. Ultimately for Sanneh, it is this property of "translatability [that] is the source of the success of Christianity across cultures" (1989:51).

Sanneh does not advance a translation theory per se, but points to the translatability of the Bible as the source of his theoretical assumptions behind translatability as a property of Christian mission. For Sanneh, language embodies culture (1989:3), so when missionaries employed local languages, what was embodied in the language of their European culture became re-formed to another culture. No only so, but the receptor culture became the new standard for Christianity because the translated language implicitly appealed to its cultural definitions. These claims rest on Sanneh's assumption of what occurs when scripture is translated:

Scriptural translation rested on the assumption that the vernacular has a primary affinity with the gospel, the point being conceded by the adoption of indigenous terms and concepts for the central categories of the Bible. As long as missionaries were committed to translation, so long would vernacular concepts and usage continue to determine the assimilation of Christianity, including the understanding of God by more inclusive criteria. (1989:166)

Thus by translating the Bible, missionaries committed a "fundamental concession to the vernacular" that determined the course of Christianity among those receiving the translation (1989:53).

Sanneh emphasizes that Bible translation has social consequences. By translating the Bible, missionaries set in motion a series of events that superseded their intentions:

Yet however strongly one might wish to resist the consequences of translation, little can be done to stop those repercussions from spreading. When one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet. Translation thus activates a process that might supersede the original intention of the translator. (1989:53)

Although Sanneh is vague on how translation accomplished its consequences, he details many and varied results which he links to missionaries' use of local languages. Among its consequences, he mentions the following outcomes:

1. "Colonial rule was irreparably damaged by the consequences of vernacular translation" (1987:331).
2. Missionary translations stimulated "nationalist awakening" (1989:106).
3. "The African church movement of the nineteenth century was the result of vernacular forces mobilized by the juggernaut of translation" (1989:120).
4. The independent churches in Africa were all inspired by "the development of indigenous languages and their use in translation" (1989:153).
5. Vernacular scriptures "ushered in a fundamental religious revolution, with new religious structures coming in to being to preside over the changes" (1989:159).

### ***Critique of Sanneh's Analysis***

In addressing Sanneh's claims for Bible translation, the following analysis first draws on theoretical arguments for the role of Bible translation within a social view of literacies and then considers the empirical evidence from the data cited in the present study.

One theoretical problem with Sanneh's claims for Bible translation is his notion that language is synonymous with culture, so that "missionary adoption of the vernacular, therefore, was tantamount to adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message" (1989:3). This treats language as if it were a lexicon of words, so that wherever you find vernacular words you also find the vernacular culture attached. Sanneh's formulation is a version of the "language reflects society" thesis, which "implies that social structures somehow exist before language, which simply 'reflects' or 'expresses' the more fundamental categories of the social" (Cameron 1990:81).

The problem with this formulation is that language is not just a lexicon but also a set of behaviors that interacts with other social behaviors that are constitutive of a particular society. In other words, the fact that Bible translation is represented in vernacular language does not mean that it automatically reflects the vernacular culture's modes of thinking and acting.

Another theoretical problem with Sanneh's argument for the consequences of Bible translation is that it is based on the "correlational fallacy": a correlation does not explain anything by itself. Even if it could be demonstrated that there is a high correlation between instances of Bible translation and the growth of Christianity, a plausible explanation would require some theory that accounts for the relationship of the Bible translation text to the practice of Christianity, with connecting reasoning for how this results in growth. However, Sanneh fails to make any argument concerning the varieties of practice surrounding translated texts; the mere decoding of the vernacular Bible text is therefore understood to effect the same outcome (growth) in many diverse circumstances.

A third problem with Sanneh's analysis of Bible translation is that he reifies the terms "translation" and "vernacular" and treats them as if they are autonomous entities that can effect consequences. Sanneh assumes two causal connections, again, based on correlation: wherever Bible translation accompanies growth in Christianity, Bible translation produces both the resultant growth and the putative "translated" Christianity, which has been transformed from Western to indigenous. If Probst attributes power to literacy with predominantly negative consequences, Sanneh attributes power to the translated vernacular Bible texts with primarily good consequences. For example, he claims at one point that by developing the written form of the language and translating the Bible, missionaries were lending authority to the force of local oral tradition (a good thing). Ironically, Probst claimed the opposite, that literacy enslaved oral indigenous tradition. Both of these positions depend on an autonomous view of literacy, that reading, writing and texts act independently of the people who use them. For Sanneh, Bible translation also has the power to transfer its status to the language in which it was translated, "confer[ing] on the vernacular an autonomous, consecrated status as the medium of God's word" (1989:208).

Sanneh's view of the autonomy of the vernacular language manifests an inadequate theory of translation. By focusing on the output of the translation process (the translated text), he fails to account for the other important aspects of translation. First, he minimizes the importance of the original language:

[T]ranslation is a highly problematic enterprise. The original is assumed to be inadequate, or defective, or inappropriate, but at any rate ineffective for the task at hand. Thus a peripheral role comes to be assigned to the original mode.

By dismissing the original, Sanneh fails to explain its relationship to the translation process. Furthermore, Sanneh characterizes the translated text as having been achieved without outside influence, so that "local converts appropriated the gospel without running it through Western filters first" (1989:177). This is also problematic because it dissociates translation from the translator. It ignores the fact that translation is an interpretive process, so that a vernacular translation may itself introduce bias, Western or otherwise, through the missionary translator. Translation theorists have also observed that translation may be a channel for both colonization and decolonization, and it is the power differentials, not the language, which determine the direction of dominance (Robinson 1997:31). Drawing on the history of Bible translation in Africa, two critiques of *Translating the Message* support this view of the variability of power differentials surrounding Bible translation: Maluleke (1993:193) notes that in mission history Bible translations have not been automatically culturally empowering, and more forcefully, Yai (1992:166) observes, "The history of missionary translation in Africa is in essence a typical history of unequal exchange."

Sanneh also has a dichotomous view of the agency of language, although it is configured slightly differently from Probst's. For Probst, written forms of language acted in qualitatively different ways from oral forms, whereas for Sanneh, "vernacular" stands in opposition to "colonial language" or "lingua franca" in what they accomplish as language and culture. Thus, not only does the vernacular act as an independent, autonomous agent, but it also has an inherent bias that is specifically congenial to Christianity. Consequently, he makes a causal connection between the use of the vernacular and the growth of Christianity: the greatest growth has been where the vernacular was the strongest, and conversely, "Christian growth has been slightest in areas where vernacular languages are weak—that is, where a *lingua franca* such as English, French, Portuguese, Arabic or Swahili has succeeded in suppressing mother tongues" (Sanneh 1987:333). It is beyond the scope of this study to verify this correlation; the point here is a theoretical one: this study contests the notion that languages and literacy have agency, let alone that a mother tongue is biased in favor of Christianity and a *lingua franca* is biased in an opposing direction.

In addition to theoretical arguments, the data presented in this study contributes to a dissenting view of the role of Bible translation in mission. One way that the data in this study contests the view that Bible translation has autonomous consequences is



the variety of ways that the various Bamkov churches used the Lamnso' New Testament. The same book was used in significantly different ways that were aligned with the denominational practices received from outwith Cameroon. The Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Churches of Christ in Bamkov all demonstrated literacy practices that made meaning with the same vernacular text in different ways. This variety of usage suggests that the vernacular translation is not the primary determinant of how meaning will be made with the text. Furthermore, these meaning-making practices have origins in church traditions from outside of Cameroon. This diminishes the claim that the local language has a primary affinity with Christianity, since the Christian literacy practices in the various denominations have extra-local origins.

The second contribution from the data is that, contrary to Sanneh's view, the mother tongue is not in competition with other languages. Multilingualism is routine among those who use scripture texts in Bamkov. For example, the Baptists routinely read the same Bible portion in Lamnso' and English. Moreover, in preparing for sermons, scripture specialists often use English textual sources. Even the least bilingual primary scripture specialists use some text in Pidgin or English, such as a catechism, to influence how they interpret scripture. These multilingual practices further contradict Sanneh's monolingual, purist view that the meaning of the vernacular scripture text can be accessed directly, unfiltered by Western language or literature.

Third, for the churches in Bamkov, the connection of the Lamnso' translation to the original Bible languages was what gave it authority. While Sanneh minimizes the importance of the biblical texts in their original languages for their inadequacy, the translators and the churches which supported the translation work were convinced of the importance and relevance of the source texts.

Translation may be an apt metaphor for mission. However, for the metaphor to be effective, translation as it is practiced and used must be adequately theorized, that is, the theory must fit and adequately explain practice. The account offered by Sanneh of Christianity as a Bible translation movement is very textual in its orientation: it sees the unwitting missionary-translator as creating vernacular texts in which Africans discovered new meanings, based on local cultural criteria, that the missionary never considered or intended (1989:53). Based on both theoretical grounds and data collected in Bamkov, a more accurate explanation sees Bible translation as an interpretation that is in important respects faithful to the original intent of the text. This vernacular text became meaningful to Africans when it was integrated into literacy practices, which were also influenced by missionary

intentions concerning the texts. The local church's practice called on a variety of meaning-making resources, including the church's tradition, other texts such as catechisms, and knowledge gained through English schooling, as well as local knowledge about the nature of the world. Thus if translation is to be an adequate metaphor for mission, it must look at all the resources that missionaries contributed to making meaning around translated texts, and then consider how these resources were used by those who received them, and how they were combined with local resources available for making meaning.

#### ***A Proposed Formulation which Considers the Context of Bible Translation***

The data collected has situated literacy in Cameroon in a variety of contexts, both past and present, local and distant. This data contributes to our understanding of Bible translation in Christian mission by adding to our understanding of what counts for context in situating Bible translation as scripture in an African setting. Context is an ambiguous term, and research cannot possibly take into account all the aspects that influence a social situation. However, by focusing on literacy events in the Bamkov settings, this research locates four sociolinguistic aspects of context that emerged as relevant for understanding the churches' use of Bible translation: the historical development of literacy practices surrounding Bible translation in each church tradition; oral and literate usages surrounding the translation; language preferences in selecting texts and speaking about them; local and global influences on literacy practices. Each of these will be explained in turn and shown how they are interrelated.

Brandt and Clinton (2002:343) describe a case<sup>8</sup> in Polynesia where the introduction of texts has instructive parallels to the context surrounding the introduction of Bible translation into Cameroon.

Besnier (p.71) notices that residents—including "respectable elderly women"—nonchalantly wear Western style teeshirts bearing risqué slogans in English. The teeshirts had been sent or brought back by family members who worked in maritime economies away from the island. Besnier observes that these slogans were among the print present on the island (along with certain public notices and announcements) that fell outside the scope of local relevance. The people were not interested in what the teeshirts had to say. The slogans, Besnier wants us to see, had no meaning to Nukulaelae society because they played no part in any recognizable literacy events.

However, we [the authors] want to notice how, as objects, the sloganed teeshirts enter into the cultural and historical facts of the

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Niko Besnier's (1995) study of literacy among the Nukulaelae of Polynesia.

island even without the mediating permission of a local literacy event. The slogans do speak to social relationships involving the people of Nukulaelae. Certainly any archaeologist who might unearth these shirts sometime in the distant future would find them meaningful and in need of explanation. As in so many cases with literacy, *the presence of print can indicate the presence of somebody else's meanings....* (emphasis added, Brandt and Clinton 2002:343-44)

The parallel is that in the mission history of Cameroon, the meaning of Bible translation was embedded in the practices surrounding the Bible in the missionaries' own culture. Each mission had practices that embodied the right ways to use the Bible, and these practices accompanied the text when it was introduced. The Bible translation text began as "someone else's meaning" and remained so until it was situated into a literacy practice employed by Cameroonians. This points to the literacy practices of those who introduced Bible translation, and the circumstances under which these practices were subsequently acquired by Cameroonians, as crucial contexts for understanding the role of Bible translation in mission.

In emphasizing the importance of the historical development of literacy practices as a context for understanding Bible translation, it is important to keep two things in mind. First, practices are cumulative, and it is important to include recent introductions of practices as well as ones in the more distant past. The history of the introduction of literacy practices surrounding Bible translation is not just a missionary history; it is also a history of the Cameroonian church. For example, the Mill Hill missionaries were influential in establishing Catholic practice in Cameroon. However, as noted in Chapter Five, it was during Bishop Verdzekov's tenure in the Diocese of Kumbo that the Lamnso' New Testament was begun. Verdzekov's support for the Lamnso' Bible translation project and his assignment of Father Loshaa to translate Catholic liturgy into Lamnso' identify him among the Cameroonians who introduced innovations into Catholic practice in Bamkov. This point is true for each of the denominations: each mission in Cameroon established practices concerning Bible translation which were modified by the local churches over time, and for the churches in Bamkov which inherited these practices, the introduction of the Lamnso' New Testament represented another significant modification in practice.

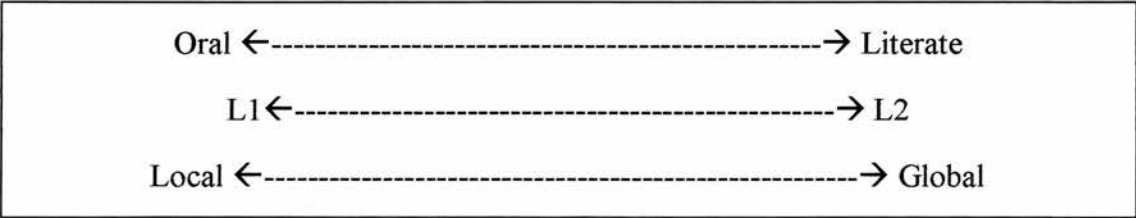
Second, Cameroonians participated in the acquisition of practices surrounding Bible translation. The description of Bible translation practices includes not only the intentions of those introducing Bible translation into Cameroon, but also an account of how those Cameroonians who received the translated texts subsequently acquired and adapted the practices surrounding those texts. In acquiring the practices accompanying the Bible translation texts, a transformation occurs: the texts are no longer solely artifacts of "someone else's meaning"; they have become part of the

meanings that Cameroonian themselves participate in making. This is illustrated in the history of language choices from the Basel Mission to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). Bible translation practices began with the Basel Mission's introduction of Mungaka Bible translation. The PCC inherited this tradition and subsequently decided to use the English language for Bible readings and liturgy. More recently, some Lamnso'-speaking churches in the PCC have adopted the Lamnso' New Testament for reading in church. Consequently, translated Bible texts from three languages could be seen in use in the same Sunday service in the Bamkov Presbyterian Church as a result of the choices that Presbyterians have made to adapt their literacy practices over time.

The remaining three aspects of context that emerged as relevant for understanding the churches' uses of Bible translation are framed as three continua (see Figure 1). These are drawn from the work of Nancy Hornberger, a linguist who has proposed a series of continua for framing our understanding of biliteracy, i.e., the use of literacy in more than one language. For Hornberger, the concept of a continuum is

intended to convey that although one can identify (and name) points on the continuum, those points are not finite, static, or discrete. There are infinitely many points on the continuum; any single point is inevitably and inextricably related to all other points; and all points have more in common than not with each other. (Hornberger 1989:5)

We have noted several authors' tendencies to dichotomize between oral and literate, and between vernacular and Western. The advantage of a continuum is that it frames these aspects of literacy practice in relation to one another instead of as contraries.



**Figure 13. Continua of biliteracy**

The first continuum describes the relation between the oral and the literate. We have already noted that there are a number of studies that contest that there is a "great divide" between orality and literacy (Gee 1996; Street 1995; Heath 1983; Scribner and Cole 1981); the concept of a continuum bridges this purported dichotomy. The continuum acknowledges that oral and literate modes are often mixed in practice,

including various combinations of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This was certainly the case in Bamkov, where reading was always observed in events mixed with oral performances (e.g., singing, preaching, recitation, etc.). Even the solitary reading activities by the scripture specialists (which were not observed) were, by the account of the specialists, preparation for some oral performance. This formulation also acknowledges the relation that we have already noted in Chapter Five between texts and recitation, that recitation allows non-readers to participate in the use of texts.

Another continuum is the relation between the first language (L1) and second language (L2). Often this has been cast in problematic terms, with languages in competition with one another, as we noted in Sanneh's assertion that *lingua francas* suppress mother tongues. However, Hornberger cites Mühlhäusler in noting that more recently (since the 1980s), there has been a conceptual shift towards recognizing linguistic diversity as an asset rather than as a problem (2004 citing Mühlhäusler 1996).

This linguistic interdependence come out clearly when one considers literacy acquisition in the Bamkov environment: the acquisition of literacy in Lamnso' and Pidgin is dependent on the acquisition of English language and literacy, primarily acquired through schooling. The general point applied to the data gathered in this study is that literacy practices in all the Bamkov churches were dependent on both school language (English) and home language (Lamnso') use, and among these sites "the important distinction appears to be less the difference in languages than the differences in contexts, functions, and use" (Hornberger 1989:13). This point is illustrated if one were to plot the sites of home, church and school on this continuum, home (as a site for solely Lamnso') and school (as a site for solely English) would be at opposite extremes. The church would be plotted in the middle of the continuum as the site where Lamnso', Pidgin, and English are all brought into play, and it is this selection and combination of languages in written and oral forms that has been the object of much of this study.

The local-global continuum acknowledges that literacy practices can be examined in relation to the immediate circumstances surrounding literacy events (local) as well as more distant influences (global). This continuum recognizes influences local to Bamkov are not mutually exclusive from influences that are extra-local, and this perspective seeks to integrate both into an adequate analysis of literacy practices. Among the more "global," distant circumstances influencing literacy that were documented in this study were the various missions' policies towards literacy and local languages and how the Advisory Committee impinged on those policies.



Contexts toward the "local" end of the continuum would include the denominational diversity in the village of Bamkov, as well as the fact that leaders of these four churches all spoke Lamnso' as their first language. Circumstances from points all along the local–global continuum are relevant contexts for understanding literacy practices surrounding Bible translation.

This analysis is consonant with Ngûgî wa Thiong'o's vision of multilingualism in Africa:

First, we have to get rid of the tyranny of monolingualism and it is not just in Africa. It is everywhere. There is an obsession with monolingualism as seen as a natural form of human intercourse. The Christian era has too long been haunted by the image of the Tower of Babel. People see many languages as a sin and say, "No, we must have one language." I think that it is time for Africa to accept the reality of multilingual societies. . . . It would mean that at the national level triglossia or four languages at the minimum would prevail. There would be for every African child a primary language—probably the mother tongue. At the continental and diasporic level, there is a need for a language that would enable continental Africans and diasporic Africans to communicate at the base of their identity while retaining whatever languages they actually have. (Ngûgî wa Thiong'o 2000)

### ***Resources for Making Meaning***

This study has examined the various types of written texts that were developed throughout the histories of the four churches in Bamkov. It notes that catechisms, primers, dictionaries, and Bible translations were created in various languages for a variety of purposes, and that these texts served as resources for those who employed them in their literacy practices. Attention has been given to the scripture specialists and their literacy practices, rather than the texts themselves, but this does not diminish the importance of texts as resources to the literacy practices. If the text of the Lamnso' translation of the New Testament had not been created, the literacy practices surrounding the Bible would have been severely impoverished. Thus, the history of the development of literacy practices includes the history of textual development.

In theorizing literacy, Gunther Kress (2000) uses the term *resources* to include much more than a text itself, and included the various modes by which people enact their literacy practices in relation to a text. In this broad view, oral and literate, L1 and L2, and local and global are all contexts that locate and identify the shapes that resources can take. According to Kress, "we always draw on the resources which we have available to us, for the purposes of making the representations that we wish or need to make" (2000:4). In light of Kress' thesis, the present research has inquired into the resources available to the four churches in Bamkov for representing meaning

around the Bible. These resources, which include both textual and non-textual practices, shape the context surrounding the use of Bible translation and literacy.

The notion of resources fits into our concept of how Bible translation operates within literacy practices. It starts from the premise that a text is meaningless when abstracted from literacy practice. In the situation of Bamkov, Bible translation begins—like the teeshirt text—with textual and social meanings that belonged to those expatriates who first introduced the Bible to the region; and, like the teeshirt, the translated text of the Bible remained an artifact of "someone else's meaning" until it was integrated into a literacy practice among the Nso' people themselves. However, there are many ways to appropriate meaning, and as has been argued, these are subject to analysis by a variety of continua. From this perspective, the shape of contextualization is drawn from all the resources available to people in the respective Bamkov churches. It is embodied in practices which draw from denominational traditions, available textual resources in several languages, and the sociolinguistic resources.

Bamkov was suggested as a research site because it met the criterion of a place where local language Bible translation could be observed in use. This study has provided descriptors for the character of that use. It has analyzed the character of Bible translation as points on a continuum that include the availability of Lamnso' texts, sufficient literacy skills (acquired through English schooling) among scripture specialists to use the texts, and a "global" environment that includes institutional support by the respective denominations for the use of the Lamnso' Bible translation. This profile of the character of the use of Bible translation in Bamkov also suggests (in theory) that the converse may exist elsewhere, among Lamnso'-speaking church in other villages. Where priests and pastor are assigned who do not speak Lamnso', where the Lamnso' New Testament has not been distributed, where few have made the transition to reading Lamnso' texts, Bible translation practice would result in texts that signify "someone else's meaning".

The study of Bible translation in its social context points to the importance of resources and repertoires of literacy practices. The presence or absence of resources is an important indicator of the quality of meaning making. Where resources for literacy practices are less developed or accessible, the meaning of the Bible text is less developed or accessible. However, for a Bible translation resource to be appropriated, it must be part of a literacy practice, part of the shared understanding of a particular church tradition's recognition of the right way to use the Bible.

### ***Constraints Inherent in the Social Meanings of Scripture***

A conclusion that results from this study is that the social meanings of scripture are highly constrained. To acknowledge that there are multiple literacies and correspondingly multiple ways to use scripture is not an admission that users of the Bible may appeal to a “contextual understanding” to justify any usage or interpretation. Gee (203:23) makes this theoretical point when he comments regarding social literacies that he is “not trying to make some relativistic point that nothing is true or better than anything else.” This comment also applies to the interpretation presented in this study, which identifies two sets of constraints on how social meaning is achieved. One set of constraints centers around the textual resources available, and another set of constraints centers around the social context.

The textual resources at hand are an important dimension of the social meaning of scripture. This study has considered at length the reasons for the absence of vernacular textual resources, i.e., the reasons that the creation of Bible translation in Lamnso' did not begin to occur until the 1970s. An assumption of this analysis is that the failure to translate the Bible into local Cameroonian languages was an important indicator of the social meaning of scripture. More recently, the cooperation of the four denominations on the translation of the Lamnso' Old Testament is an indicator of the importance of the biblical text in Lamnso' for these churches. Furthermore, this study noted that the creation of new textual resources in the form of Bible translation encourages the possibility of new interpretations of the Bible, as seen in Bernadette's alternative interpretation of Jonah. Whether seen from the perspective of the translation committee's intent to produce a faithful translation, or from the perspective of Bernadette's attempt to interpret Jonah, the text matters and it must be taken into account for an adequate understanding of the social meaning of Bible translation.

Another set of constraints on the social meaning of Bible translation centers around ways that the social context influences the valid usage and meaning of the text. Usages and meanings of Bible translation are validated or disqualified in relation to each church's common understanding of what constitutes valid literacy practices concerning the Bible. These social meanings of scripture constrain the range of usages and interpretations that are admissible within a particular church. This does not mean that all innovation is disqualified; rather, it means that the social group must recognize an innovation as valid.

The nature of these social constraints becomes clearer when a change in practice or belief is considered. Some changes to social meaning may come from within the

local church community. As additional portions of Lamnso' Bible translation become available to Christians in Bamkov, it is possible that new usages and meanings will be proposed as a result of new inferences made from reading the Lamnso' biblical texts. Some inferences, such as Bernadette's interpretation of Jonah, may be disqualified, but other new meanings may be accepted as commensurate with existing belief and practice. Furthermore, changes in each church's scriptural understanding may be initiated from outside the local church. As changes in the practice of the rosary were initiated from Rome and accepted by the Bamkov Catholic Church, so other changes in the practice of scripture may come from outside of Bamkov. The point here is not that the social meaning of scripture is a constraint which inhibits innovation, but that the validity of new meanings is both constrained and achieved through social processes which recognize the acceptability of a particular scriptural meaning.

This interplay between the text and the social ways that a community makes meaning with the text is an important area for further research. On one occasion I related the story of Bernadette's interpretation of Jonah to an SIL colleague of mine who is a consultant for a Bible translation project for another Cameroonian language. His response to Bernadette's use of the Jonah story to justify divination was something like, "I knew it! When I was consulting on the translation of Jonah, I was afraid that if we used the local word for divination, people would interpret it to mean that it is a legitimate practice." This further illustrates the constraints of translation and the need for research on the ways that the text will be understood. Clearly the original intent of the biblical text is important and one cannot second-guess all the ways that it may be construed. Nevertheless, it is also important to the translator to take into account how people draw inferences from the text based on their context.

Finally, an important theoretical point made in Chapter Two should be brought into the foreground: research concerning scripture is research concerning a community's understanding and experience of God. This study has focused on the social significance of language choices surrounding Bible translation, which is a topic that has not been previously addressed in the study of African Christianity. However, scripture has also been shown in this study to be a theological category in which the text ceases to be scripture when it is regarded without reference to God.<sup>9</sup> The intent of this study is to contribute to the knowledge concerning this theological

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<sup>9</sup> This is reminiscent of Chesterton's (1923:10-11) comment in his biography of St. Francis: "to tell the story of a saint without God. . . is like being told to write the life of Nansen and forbidden to mention the North Pole."

category. The evidence presented in this study leads to the conclusion that the social processes surrounding Bible translation are important features of scripture. These contours of the linguistic experience of Christians in Bamkov give shape to a description of the theological category of scripture. Although the details of this study pertain to one village in Nso', and no claim is made that the practice of scripture described in Bamkov is the same elsewhere, yet these details and their interpretation intend to contribute to a larger understanding of what it means to be a Christian in Africa.



## Conclusion

The research of this thesis was conducted with a keen interest in discovering how Bible translation is incorporated into Christian practice in a Cameroonian context. By focusing on the practices surrounding the use of the Bible, this study has enlarged the understanding of what constitutes a context for local use of the Bible in one Nso' community. The study has examined the sociolinguistic features surrounding the use of Bible translation among four Nso' churches, with particular reference to the language choices that are reflected in the ways four congregations in Bamkov relate to scripture. It has been demonstrated that these choices—to read or discuss the text in one language or another—are made in ways that are influenced by historical, educational, linguistic, and denominational factors which have produced distinctive practices in each church. These historical and contemporary influences have been assessed, and the ways in which they continue to affect the current use of Bible translation and literacy among the four churches in Bamkov have been disclosed.

The Bamkov research site was selected from among sites in Africa where Bible translations have been completed, on the grounds that churches there were using the translated scriptures in their African language. The Bamkov research site is characteristic of many settings in Africa in several respects: the local use of an African language that is one among many in the national context; a history of colonial occupation and the ongoing use of a European colonial language; a school system established by mission organizations; and diverse Christian denominations in close proximity. The Bamkov research site provided an opportunity to discover what the study of local history and practices surrounding Bible translation would reveal about the character of African Christianity.

This study draws on theoretical contributions from several sources. First, the theory of NLS is presented in order to establish a research methodology that investigates the social practices which accompany Bible translation. NLS claims that literacy should be understood in terms of social expectations and practices concerning texts, rather than solely in terms of cognitive skills for decoding letters and words. Applied to this research setting among Cameroonian churches, social literacies are understood to be the social processes surrounding the ways that readers and audiences in each church use the biblical text to make meaning.

A second theoretical contribution is the link established between this social conception of multiple social literacies and Wilfred Cantwell Smith's religio-

historical theory of what scripture is. Smith's theory acknowledges the transcendental nature of scripture on the grounds of its being the expression of a group's relationship to God. The similarity between the social aspects of these two theories (NLS and Smith) provides a framework for employing the same research methodology for studying scripture as for studying social literacies. Theorized as social processes surrounding sacred texts, the details of this study may be understood as contributions to the understanding of Nso' scripture, which belongs to a category that is both socio-linguistic and theological.

In addition to these two theories regarding importance of social context for construing the meaning of texts, Relevance Theory has been used as a means of providing a more plausible account of the role of the text in making meaning. It emphasizes the notion that people make meaning from texts through an inferential process that draws on the context at hand. The strength of Relevance Theory lies in the fact that it does not dismiss the role of the text in making meaning, as the other two theories appear to do. Applying Relevance Theory to translation, Gutt draws on the notion of faithfulness, i.e., the meaning inferred from the translated text must be faithful to the intent of the original text. The data examined in this study confirms this theoretical principle: scripture specialists are seen to expect various translations of the Bible to correspond in meaning, and their substitution of one translation of the Bible for another is justified on the grounds that they believe them to mean the same thing (more or less) as the original texts from which the translations were created.

This study's theoretical stance, methodological approach, and research data led to an interpretation of how scripture is used in particular church settings. The interpretation emphasized that the competencies to use scripture in the sites studied (i.e., church services and church sponsored activities) were possessed by only a few people. They were acquired through a combination of schooling and denominational training. Two important points emerged from this analysis. First, all the scripture specialists acquired literacy skills through English-medium schooling, and they are required to be able to read some Pidgin or English in order to carry out their responsibilities. There are no monolingual scripture specialists in Bamkov. Second, all the scripture specialists acquired their skills through denominational orientation and training that included the use of written source material, which was also in Pidgin or English. No scripture specialists learned to use the Lamnso' Bible translation by itself without reference to denominational training and written materials produced by a particular church tradition. In the cases of the Church of Christ, Baptist and Presbyterian churches, materials are in English,<sup>1</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> In the Presbyterian Church, training and materials were formerly in Mungaka.

scriptural competencies they acquire are transferred to the Lamnso' Bible. In the Catholic Church, written catechisms are available in Pidgin and Lamnso', as well as English.

This analysis applies to all the scripture specialists observed in Bamkov, but the research showed that dependence on training and materials in English is more pronounced as people acquire higher levels of denominational specialization. For purposes of analysis, levels of scriptural competence were distinguished: those with a low level of schooling and training (catechists and Sunday School teachers) were designated in this study as primary scripture specialists, and those with a higher level of schooling (priests and pastors) were designated as secondary scripture specialists. Because training of primary scripture specialists takes place at the local level, much of it could be conducted orally in Lamnso' even if the written materials were in some other language. However, all the secondary scripture specialists acquired their specialization by attending Bible school or seminary in institutions located outside of Bamkov, and all of this instruction was in English with materials in English including the use of English Bible translations.

This interpretation contrasts with other formulations of the role of literacy and Bible translation in African church contexts, which are critiqued in Chapter Six. These accounts emphasize the textual quality of literacy or the language of Bible translation as the defining features for interpreting literacy and Bible translation in African Christianity. In his analysis of Aladura literacy, Probst posits the textual nature of literacy as the feature that dominates other oral forms of expression. According to this argument, the Aladura leader Oshitelu capitalized on the written form of the Holy Seals to overcome weaker oral forms of Christian practice. Similarly, in his analysis of vernacular Bible translation, Sanneh proposes that the vernacular quality of Bible translation has influenced the character of African Christianity towards becoming a vernacular expression of Christianity. He finds the language of the Bible text to be the significant factor influencing the growth and character of such Christianity.

In contrast, this study emphasizes that such understandings of the biblical text do not adequately account for the data. It has been shown that the language of the Bible does not by itself account for the ways in which it is used in Bamkov, or the role that usage plays as a context for making meaning. The sociolinguistic complexity of the Bamkov scripture contexts requires a model that takes into account oral and literate usages, first and second languages, and local and international influences on scripture practice. Hornberger's *continua of biliteracy* is proposed as such a model which accounts for the complexity of the data.

The data analyzed in this study leads to several conclusions about the character of Christianity in the contexts studied:

First, the development of local language and the translation of the Bible are vital resources for the Bamkov churches. This study's emphasis on social context does not diminish the importance of having the text of the Lamnso' Bible and people who can read it. Indeed, a significant point of this investigation was the explanation of the fact that there have been so few Bible translations done in Cameroon in spite of demonstratable sympathies on the part of missionaries for the use of local languages. The leaders of the Bamkov churches value the Lamnso' Bible and use it, and the character of Christianity in Bamkov would be different without these textual resources.

Second, the development of Bible translation and literacy needs to be understood in its diversity. Consider three different historical and social contexts described in this study where Bible translation was done in Cameroon. First, Alfred Saker developed Bible translation and local language schooling in a particular pre-colonial context in the absence of any other schooling options in Cameroon. Second, the Basel Mission developed Mungaka translation and schooling among the Grassfields tribes in close proximity to German colonial conquest. Third, the development of Lamnso' literacy and Bible translation was created in a post-independence environment where schooling in English was widespread and the decision to participate in the use of the translation was made by Cameroonian church leaders. These are very different educational and social contexts. The NLS notion of multiple literacies needs to be transferred to the account of Bible translation so that the multiplicity of local expressions of Christianity are appreciated.

Third, the expression of Christianity in Bamkov is multilingual. An adequate analysis of this particular contextualization of Christianity has to account for the practices in Lamnso', English, and Pidgin in written and oral forms. Liturgical texts and Bible translations in several languages are central to these practices in all the services observed in Bamkov. At no time was monolingualism demonstrated or advocated by scripture specialists either in favor of English or Lamnso'. This problematizes any characterization of vernacular Christianity which is essentialized by one linguistic criterion: whether or not the mother tongue is used.

Fourth, Christianity in Bamkov is represented in a variety of denominations. The translation of the Bible into Lamnso' has not led the churches to coalesce into one particular local version of Christianity. The text of the Bible is vitally important to all the churches, but the quality of this importance can only be understood against the

backdrop of what it means to be a Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, or member of the Church of Christ.

The significance of this analysis is that it draws from relevant data external to the text of the Bible, including the history of language development, the practices that surround scripture use in the church settings, and the competencies of the scripture specialists. The result is an interpretation in which the translated text does not stipulate its own use. The analysis of language choices in the Bamkov context posits that the text of the Lamnso' Bible is a resource subject to educational, linguistic, and denominational precedents that influence its usage.

This research contributes new theory and data to the study of African Christianity. This study is the first to propose the use of the theories of NLS, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Relevance Theory for research on Bible translation in an African church context. It is hoped that the theory will motivate further research, so that it may be tested for its adequacy to explain data on the ways that Bible translation is used (or fails to be used) in other African contexts. This study also contributes new data about the use of Bible translation. The analysis suggests that education, multilingualism, and denominational background are important features of the quality of scripture use in these particular contexts in Bamkov. Again, it is hoped that these particulars will be the occasion for further comparative research in other contexts where churches are using Bible translation and literacy in African languages.



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